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REGULATED HATRED:

AN ASPECT OF THE WORK OF JANE AUSTEN[1]

I.

THE impression of Jane Austen which has filtered through to the reading public down from the first-hand critics, through histories of literature, university courses, literary journalism and polite allusion, deters many who might be her best readers from bothering with her at all. How can this popular impression be described? In my experience the first idea to be absorbed from the atmosphere surrounding her work was that she offered exceptionally favourable openings to the exponents of urbanity. Gentlemen of an older generation than mine spoke of their intention of re-reading her on their deathbeds; Eric Linklater's cultured Prime Minister in *The Impregnable Women* passes from surreptitious to abandoned reading of her novels as a national crisis deepens. With this there also came the impression that she provided a refuge for the sensitive when the contemporary world grew too much for them. So Beatrice Kean Seymour writes (*Jane Austen*): 'In a society which has enthroned the machine-gun and carried it aloft even into the quiet heavens, there will always be men and women—Escapist or not, as you please—who will turn to her novels with an unending sense of relief and thankfulness.'

I was given to understand that her scope was of course extremely restricted, but that within her limits she succeeded admirably in expressing the gentler virtues of a civilised social order. She could do this because she lived at a time when, as a sensitive person of culture, she could still feel that she had a place in society and could address the reading public as

[1]A paper read before the Literary Society of Manchester University, March 3rd, 1939.

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sympathetic equals; she might introduce unpleasant people into her stories but she could confidently expose them to a public opinion that condemned them. Chiefly, so I gathered, she was a delicate satirist, revealing with inimitable lightness of touch the comic foibles and amiable weaknesses of the people whom she lived amongst and liked.

All this was enough to make me quite certain I didn't want to read her. And it is, I believe, a seriously misleading impression. Fragments of the truth have been incorporated in it but they are fitted into a pattern whose total effect is false. And yet the wide currency of this false impression is an indication of Jane Austen's success in an essential part of her complex intention as a writer: her books are, as she meant them to be, read and enjoyed by precisely the sort of people whom she disliked; she is a literary classic of the society which attitudes like hers, held widely enough, would undermine.

In order to enjoy her books without disturbance those who retain the conventional notion of her work must always have had slightly to misread what she wrote at a number of scattered points, points where she took good care (not wittingly perhaps) that the misreading should be the easiest thing in the world. Unexpected astringencies occur which the comfortable reader probably overlooks, or else passes by as slight imperfections, trifling errors of tone brought about by a faulty choice of words. Look at the passage in *Northanger Abbey* where Henry Tilney offers a solemn reprimand of Catherine's fantastic suspicions about his father:

> 'Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of these suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you. Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open?'

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Had the passage really been as I quote it nothing would have been out of tone. But I omitted a clause. The last sentence actually runs: 'Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open?' 'Where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies'—with its touch of paranoia that surprising remark is badly out of tune both with 'Henry's astonishing generosity and nobleness of conduct' and with the accepted idea of Jane Austen.

Yet it comes quite understandably from someone of Jane Austen's sensitive intelligence, living in her world of news and gossip interchanged amongst and around a large family. She writes to Cassandra (September 14th, 1804), 'My mother is at this moment reading a letter from my aunt. Yours to Miss Irvine of which she had had the perusal (which by the bye in your place I should not like) has thrown them into a quandary about Charles and his prospects. The case is that my mother had previously told my aunt, without restriction, that . . . whereas you had replied to Miss Irvine's inquiries on the subject with less explicitness and more caution. Never mind, let them puzzle on together.'' And when Fanny Knight (her niece) writes confidentially about her love affair, Jane Austen describes ruses she adopted to avoid having to read the letter to the family, and later implores Fanny to 'write *something* that may do to be read or told' (November 30th, 1814).

Why is it that, holding the view she did of people's spying, Jane Austen should slip it in amongst Henry Tilney's eulogies of the age? By doing so she achieves two ends, ends which she may not have consciously aimed at. In such a speech from such a character the remark is unexpected and unbelievable, with the result that it is quite unlikely to be taken in at all by many readers; it slips through their minds without creating a disturbance. It gets said, but with the minimum risk of setting people's backs up. The second end achieved by giving the remark such a context is that of off-setting it at once by more appreciative views of society and so refraining from indulging an exaggerated bitterness. The eulogy of the age is not nullified by the bitter clause, but neither

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can it wipe out the impression the clause makes on those who attend to it.

One cannot say that here the two attitudes modify one another. The technique is too weak. Jane Austen can bring both attitudes into the picture but she has not at this point made one picture of them. In *Persuasion* she does something of the same kind more delicately. Miss Elliot's chagrin at having failed to marry her cousin is being described in the terms of ordinary satire which invites the reading public to feel superior to Miss Elliot:

> ' There was not a baronet from A to Z whom her feelings could have so willingly acknowledged as an equal. Yet so miserably had he conducted himself, that though she was at this present time (the summer of 1814) wearing black ribbons for his wife, she could not admit him to be worth thinking of again. The disgrace of his first marriage might, perhaps, as there was no reason to suppose it perpetuated by offspring, have been got over, had he not done worse ; '

—and then at this point the satire suddenly directs itself against the public instead of Miss Elliot—

> ' but he had, as by the accustomary intervention of kind friends they had been informed, spoken most disrespectfully of them all . . .'

In *Emma* the same thing is done still more effectively. Again Jane Austen seems to be on perfectly good terms with the public she is addressing and to have no reserve in offering the funniness and virtues of Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates to be judged by the accepted standards of the public. She invites her readers to be just their natural patronising selves. But this public that Jane Austen seems on such good terms with has some curious things said about it, not criticisms, but small notes of fact that are usually not made. They almost certainly go unnoticed by many readers, for they involve only the faintest change of tone from something much more usual and acceptable.

When she says that Miss Bates ' enjoyed a most uncommon degree of popularity for a woman neither young, handsome, rich, nor married, this is fairly conventional satire that any reading public would cheerfully admit in its satirist and chuckle over. But the

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next sentence must have to be mentally re-written by the greater number of Jane Austen's readers. For them it probably runs, 'Miss Bates stood in the very worst predicament in the world for having much of the public favour; and she had no intellectual superiority to make atonement to herself, or compel an outward respect from those who might despise her.' This, I suggest, is how most readers, lulled and disarmed by the amiable context, will soften what in fact reads, '. . . . and she had no intellectual superiority to make atonement to herself, or frighten those who might hate her into outward respect.' Jane Austen was herself at this time 'neither young, handsome, rich, nor married,' and the passage perhaps hints at the functions which her unquestioned intellectual superiority may have had for her.

This eruption of fear and hatred into the relationships of every-day social life is something that the urbane admirer of Jane Austen finds distasteful; it is not the satire of one who writes securely for the entertainment of her civilised acquaintances. And it has the effect, for the attentive reader, of changing the flavour of the more ordinary satire amongst which it is embedded.

Emma is especially interesting from this point of view. What is sometimes called its greater 'mellowness' largely consists in saying quietly and undisguisedly things which in the earlier books were put more loudly but in the innocuous form of caricature. Take conversation for instance. Its importance and its high (though by no means supreme) social value are of course implicit in Jane Austen's writings. But one should beware of supposing that a mind like hers therefore found the ordinary social intercourse of the period congenial and satisfying. In *Pride and Prejudice* she offers an entertaining caricature of card-table conversation at Lady Catherine de Bourgh's house.

> 'Their table was superlatively stupid. Scarcely a syllable was uttered that did not relate to the game, except when Mrs. Jenkinson expressed her fears of Miss de Bourgh's being too hot or too cold, or having too much or too little light. A great deal more passed at the other table. Lady Catherine was generally speaking—stating the mistakes of the three others, or relating some anecdote of herself. Mr. Collins was employed in agreeing to everying her ladyship said, thanking her for every fish he

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won, and apologising if he thought he won too many. Sir William did not say much. He was storing his memory with anecdotes and noble names.'

This invites the carefree enjoyment of all her readers. They can all feel superior to Lady Catherine and Mr. Collins. But in *Emma* the style changes: the talk at the Cole's dinner party, a pleasant dinner party which the heroine enjoyed, is described as ' . . . the usual rate of conversation; a few clever things said, a few downright silly, but by much the larger proportion neither the one nor the other—nothing worse than everyday remarks, dull repetitions, old news, and heavy jokes.' ' Nothing worse '!—that phrase is typical. It is not mere sarcasm by any means. Jane Austen genuinely valued the achievements of the civilisation she lived within and never lost sight of the fact that there might be something vastly worse than the conversation she referred to. ' Nothing worse ' is a positive tribute to the decency, the superficial friendliness, the absence of the grosser forms of insolence and self-display at the dinner party. At least Mrs. Elton wasn't there. And yet the effect of the comment, if her readers took it seriously would be that of a disintegrating attack upon the sort of social intercourse they have established for themselves. It is not the comment of one who would have helped to make her society what it was, or ours what it is.

To speak of this aspect of her work as ' satire ' is perhaps misleading. She has none of the underlying didactic intention ordinarily attributed to the satirist. Her object is not missionary; it is the more desperate one of merely finding some mode of existence for her critical attitudes. To her the first necessity was to keep on reasonably good terms with the associates of her everyday life; she had a deep need of their affection and a genuine respect for the ordered, decent civilisation that they upheld. And yet she was sensitive to their crudenesses and complacencies and knew that her real existence depended on resisting many of the values they implied. The novels gave her a way out of this dilemma. This, rather than the ambition of entertaining a posterity of urbane gentlemen, was her motive force in writing.

As a novelist, therefore, part of her aim was to find the means for unobtrustive spiritual survival, without open conflict with the

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friendly people around her whose standards in simpler things she could accept and whose affection she greatly needed. She found, of course, that one of the most useful peculiarities of her society was its willingness to remain blind to the implications of a caricature. She found people eager to laugh at faults they tolerated in themselves and their friends, so long as the faults were exaggerated and the laughter ' good-natured '—so long, that is, as the assault on society could be regarded as a mock assault and not genuinely disruptive. Satire such as this is obviously a means not of admonition but of self-preservation.

Hence one of Jane Austen's most successful methods is to offer her readers every excuse for regarding as rather exaggerated figures of fun people whom she herself detests and fears. Mrs. Bennet, according to the Austen tradition, is one of ' our ' richly comic characters about whom we can feel superior, condescending, perhaps a trifle sympathetic, and above all heartily amused and free from care. Everything conspires to make this the natural interpretation once you are willing to overlook Jane Austen's bald and brief statement of her own attitude to her: ' She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper.' How many women amongst Jane Austen's acquaintance and amongst her most complacent readers to the present day that phrase must describe! How gladly they enjoy the funny side of the situations Mrs. Bennet's unpleasant nature creates, and how easy it is made for them to forget or never observe that Jane Austen, none the less for seeing how funny she is, goes on detesting her. The thesis that the ruling standards of our social group leave a perfectly comfortable niche for detestable people and give them sufficient sanction to persist, would, if it were argued seriously, arouse the most violent opposition, the most determined apologetics for things as they are, and the most reproachful pleas for a sense of proportion.

Caricature served Jane Austen's purpose perfectly. Under her treatment one can never say where caricature leaves off and the claim to serious portraiture begins. Mr. Collins is only given a trifle more comic exaggeration than Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and by her standards is a possible human being. Lady Catherine in turn seems acceptable as a portrait if the criterion of verisimilitude is her nephew Mr. Darcy. And he, finally, although

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to some extent a caricature, is near enough natural portraiture to stand beside Elizabeth Bennet, who, like all the heroines, is presented as an undistorted portrait. The simplest comic effects are gained by bringing the caricatures into direct contact with the real people, as in Mr. Collins' visit to the Bennets and his proposal to Elizabeth. But at the same time one knows that, though from some points of view caricature, in other directions he does, by easy stages, fit into the real world. He is real enough to Mrs. Bennet; and she is real enough to Elizabeth to create a situation of real misery for her when she refuses. Consequently the proposal scene is not only comic fantasy, but it is also, for Elizabeth, a taste of the fantastic nightmare in which economic and social institutions have such power over the values of personal relationships that the comic monster is nearly able to get her.

The implications of her caricatures as criticism of real people in real society is brought out in the way they dovetail into their social setting. The decent, stodgy Charlotte puts up cheerfully with Mr. Collins as a husband; and Elizabeth can never quite become reconciled to the idea that her friend is the wife of her comic monster. And that, of course, is precisely the sort of idea that Jane Austen herself could never grow reconciled to. The people she hated were tolerated, accepted, comfortably ensconced in the only human society she knew; they were, for her, society's embarrassing unconscious comment on itself. A recent writer on Jane Austen, Elizabeth Jenkins, puts forward the polite and more comfortable interpretation in supposing Charlotte's marriage to be explained solely by the impossibility of young women's earning their own living at that period. But Charlotte's complaisance goes deeper than that: it is shown as a considered indifference to personal relationships when they conflict with cruder advantages in the wider social world:

> ' She had always felt that Charlotte's opinion of matrimony was not exactly like her own, but she could not have supposed it possible that, when called into action, she would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage.'

We know too, at the biographical level, that Jane Austen herself, in a precisely similar situation to Charlotte's, spent a night of psychological crisis in deciding to revoke her acceptance of an

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' advantageous ' proposal made the previous evening. And her letters to Fanny Knight show how deep her convictions went at this point.

It is important to notice that Elizabeth makes no break with her friend on account of the marriage. This was the sort of friend —'a friend disgracing herself and sunk in her esteem'—that went to make up the available social world which one could neither escape materially nor be independent of psychologically. The impossibility of being cut off from objectionable people is suggested more subtly in *Emma,* where Mrs. Elton is the high light of the pervasive neglect of spiritual values in social life. One can hardly doubt that Jane Austen's own dealings with society are reflected in the passage where Mr. Weston makes the error of inviting Mrs. Elton to join the picnic party which he and Emma have planned:

> ' . . . Emma could not but feel some surprise, and a little displeasure, on hearing from Mr. Weston that he had been proposing to Mrs. Elton, as her brother and sister had failed her, that the two parties should unite, and go together, and that as Mrs. Elton had very readily acceded to it, so it was to be, if she had no objection. Now, as her objection was nothing but her very great dislike of Mrs. Elton, of which Mr. Weston must already be perfectly aware, it was not worth bringing forward: it could not be done without a reproof to him, which would be giving pain to his wife; and she found herself, therefore, obliged to consent to an arrangement which she would have done a great deal to avoid; an arrangement which would, probably, expose her even to the degradation of being said to be of Mrs. Elton's party! Every feeling was offended; and the forbearance of her outward submission left a heavy arrear due of secret severity in her reflections, on the unmanageable good-will of Mr. Weston's temper.
>
> ' "I am glad you approve of what I have done," said he, very comfortably. " But I thought you would. Such schemes as these are nothing without numbers. One cannot have too large a party. A large party secures its own amusement. And she is a good-natured woman after all. One could not leave her out."

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'Emma denied none of it aloud, and agreed to none of it in private.'

This well illustrates Jane Austen's typical dilemma: of being intensely critical of people to whom she also has strong emotional attachments.

II.

The social group having such ambivalence for her, it is not surprising if her conflict should find some outlets not fully within her conscious control. To draw attention to these, however, is not to suggest that they lessen the value of her conscious intention and its achievements.

The chief instance is the fascination she found in the Cinderella theme, the Cinderella theme with the fairy godmother omitted. For in Jane Austen's treatment the natural order of things manages to reassert the heroine's proper pre-eminence without the intervention of any human or quasi-human helper. In this respect she allies the Cinderella theme to another fairy-tale theme which is often introduced—that of the princess brought up by unworthy parents but never losing the delicate sensibilities which are an inborn part of her. This latter theme appears most explicitly in *Mansfield Park,* the unfinished story of *The Watsons,* and, with some softening, in *Pride and Prejudice.* The contrast between Fanny Price's true nature and her squalid home at Portsmouth is the clearest statement of the idea, but in the first four of the finished novels the heroine's final position is, even in the worldly sense, always above her reasonable social expectations by conventional standards, but corresponding to her natural worth.

To leave it at this, however, would be highly misleading. It is the development which occurs in her treatment of the Cinderella theme that most rewards attention. In *Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* it is handled simply; the heroine is in some degree isolated from those around her by being more sensitive or of finer moral insight or sounder judgment, and her marriage to the handsome prince at the end is in the nature of a reward for being different from the rest and a consolation for the distresses entailed by being different. This is true even of

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Northanger Abbey in spite of the grotesque error of judgment that Catherine Morland is guilty of and has to renounce. For here Jane Austen was interested not so much in the defect in her heroine's judgment as in the absurdly wide currency of the 'gothick' tradition that entrapped her. Catherine throws off her delusion almost as something external to herself. And this is so glaring that Jane Austen seems to have been uncomfortable about it: in describing it she resorts to a rather factitious semi-detachment from her heroine.

> 'Her mind made up on these several points, and her resolution formed, of always judging and acting in future with the greatest good sense, she had nothing to do but to forgive herself and be happier than ever; and the lenient hand of time did much for her by insensible gradations in the course of another day.'

In *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* the heroines are still nearer perfection and even the handsome princes have faults to overcome before all is well. Immediately after her final reconciliation with Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth Bennet is tempted to laugh at his over-confident direction of his friend Bingley's love affair, '. . . . but she checked herself. She remembered that he had yet to learn to be laughed at, and it was rather too early to begin.'

To put the point in general terms, the heroine of these early novels is herself the criterion of sound judgment and good feeling. She may claim that her values are sanctioned by good breeding and a religious civilisation, but in fact none of the people she meets represents those values so effectively as she does herself. She is never in submissive alliance with the representatives of virtue and good feeling in her social world—there is only a selective alliance with certain aspects of their characters. The social world may have material power over her, enough to make her unhappy, but it hasn't the power that comes from having created or moulded her, and it can claim no credit for her being what she is. In this sense the heroine is independent of those about her and isolated from them. She has only to be herself.

The successful handling of this kind of theme and this heroine brought Jane Austen to the point where a development became psychologically possible. The hint of irrationality underlying the

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earlier themes could be brought nearer the light. She could begin to admit that even a heroine must owe a great deal of her character and values to the social world in which she had been moulded, and, that being so, could hardly be quite so solitary in her excellence as the earlier heroines are. The emphasis hitherto had been almost entirely on the difference between the heroine and the people about her. But this was to slight the reality of her bond with the ordinary ' good ' people; there was more to be said for the fundamentals of virtue and seemliness than she had been implying. And so, after the appearance of *Pride and Prejudice,* she wrote to Cassandra, ' Now I will try and write of something else, and it shall be a complete change of subject—ordination . . .' (January 29th, 1813.)

This sets the tone of *Mansfield Park,* the new novel. Here her emphasis is on the deep importance of the conventional virtues, of civilised seemliness, decorum, and sound religious feeling. These become the worthy objects of the heroine's loyalties; and they so nearly comprise the whole range of her values that Fanny Price is the least interesting of all the heroines. For the first time, Jane Austen sets the heroine in submissive alliance with the conventionally virtuous people of the story, Sir Thomas and Edmund. Mistaken though these pillars of society may in some respects be, the heroine's proper place is at their side; their standards are worthy of a sensitive person's support and complete allegiance.

It is a novel in which Jane Austen pays tribute to the virtuous fundamentals of her upbringing, ranging herself with those whom she considers right on the simpler and more obvious moral issues, and withdrawing her attention—relatively at least—from the finer details of living in which they may disturb her. She allies herself with virtues that are easy to appreciate and reasonably often met with. The result, as one would expect, is a distinct tendency to priggishness. And, of course, the book was greatly liked. ' Mr. H[aden] is reading *Mansfield Park* for the first time and prefers it to *P. and P.*' (November 26th, 1815). 'Mr. Cook [himself a clergyman] says " it is the most sensible novel he ever read," and the manner in which I treat the clergy delights them very much.' (June 14th, 1814). Compared with *Mansfield Park,* Jane Austen is afraid that *Emma* will appear ' inferior in good sense.' (December 11th, 1815). It was after reading *Mansfield Park,*

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moreover, that the pompously self-satisfied Librarian to the Prince Regent offered her, almost avowedly, his own life story as the basis for a novel about an English clergyman. He must have been one of the first of the admirer-victims who have continued to enjoy her work to this day. And her tactful and respectful reply (' The comic part of the character I might be equal to, but not the good, the enthusiastic, the literary ') illustrates admirably her capacity for keeping on good terms with people without too great treachery to herself.

The priggishness of *Mansfield Park* is the inevitable result of the curiously abortive attempt at humility that the novel represents. Although it involves the recognition that heroines are not spontaneously generated but owe much of their personality to the established standards of their society, the perfection of the heroine is still not doubted. And so the effort towards humility becomes in effect the exclamation, ' Why, some of the very good people are nearly as good as I am and really do deserve my loyalty! '

There is no external evidence that Jane Austen was other than highly satisfied with *Mansfield Park,* which is, after all, in many ways interesting and successful. But its *reductio ad absurdam* of the Cinderella theme and the foundling princess theme could hardly have been without effect. This, I think, is already visible in the last chapter, which, with its suggestion of a fairy-tale winding up of the various threads of the story, is ironically perfunctory. For instance:

> ' I purposely abstain from dates on this occasion, that every one may be at liberty to fix their own, aware that the cure of unconquerable passions, and the transfer of unchanging attachments, must vary much as to time in different people. I only entreat everybody to believe that exactly at the time when it was quite natural that it should be so, and not a week earlier, Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny as Fanny herself could desire.'

And Sir Thomas's ' high sense of having realised a great acquisition in the promise of Fanny for a daughter, formed just such a contrast with his early opinion on the subject when the poor little girl's coming had first been agitated, as time is for ever pro-

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ducing between the plans and decisions of mortals, for their own instruction and their neighbours' entertainment.'

Whether or not Jane Austen realised what she had been doing, at all events the production of *Mansfield Park* enabled her to go on next to the extraordinary achievement of *Emma,* in which a much more complete humility is combined with the earlier unblinking attention to people as they are. The underlying argument has a different trend. She continues to see that the heroine has derived from the people and conditions around her, but she now keeps clearly in mind the objectionable features of those people; and she faces the far bolder conclusion that even a heroine is likely to have assimilated many of the more unpleasant possibilities of the human being in society. And it is not that society has spoilt an originally perfect girl who now has to recover her pristine good sense, as it was with Catherine Morland, but that the heroine has not yet achieved anything like perfection and is actually going to learn a number of serious lessons from some of the people she lives with.

Consider in the first place the treatment here of the two favourite themes of the earlier novels. The Cinderella theme is now relegated to the sub-heroine, Jane Fairfax. Its working out involves the discomfiture of the heroine, who in this respect is put into the position of one of the ugly sisters. Moreover the Cinderella procedure is shown in the light of a social anomaly, rather a nuisance and requiring the excuse of unusual circumstances.

The associated theme of the child brought up in humble circumstances whose inborn nature fits her for better things is frankly parodied and deflated in the story of Harriet Smith, the illegitimate child whom Emma tries to turn into a snob. In the end, with the insignificant girl cheerfully married to a deserving farmer, 'Harriet's parentage became known. She proved to be the daughter of a tradesman, rich enough to afford her the comfortable maintenance which had ever been hers, and decent enough to have always wished for concealment. Such was the blood of gentility which Emma had formerly been so ready to vouch for! '

Thus the structure of the narrative expresses a complete change in Jane Austen's outlook on the heroine in relation to others. And the story no longer progresses towards her vindication or consolation; it consists in her gradual, humbling self-enlightenment. Emma's personality includes some of the tendencies and qualities

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that Jane Austen most disliked—self-complacency, for instance, malicious enjoyment in prying into embarrassing private affairs, snobbery, and a weakness for meddling in other people's lives. But now, instead of being attributed in exaggerated form to a character distanced into caricature, they occur in the subtle form given them by someone who in many ways has admirably fine standards.

We cannot say that in *Emma* Jane Austen abandons the Cinderella story. She so deliberately inverts it that we ought to regard *Emma* as a bold variant of the theme and a further exploration of its underlying significance for her. In *Persuasion* she goes back to the Cinderella situation in its most direct and simple form, but develops a vitally important aspect of it that she had previously avoided. This is the significance for Cinderalla of her idealised dead mother.

Most children are likely to have some conflict of attitude towards their mother, finding her in some respects an ideal object of love and in others an obstacle to their wishes and a bitter disappointment. For a child such as Jane Austen who actually was in many ways more sensitive and able than her mother, one can understand that this conflict may persist in some form for a very long time. Now one of the obvious appeals of the Cinderella story, as of all stories of wicked step-mothers, is that it resolves the ambivalence of the mother by the simple plan of splitting her in two: the ideal mother is dead and can be adored without risk of disturbance; the living mother is completely detestable and can be hated whole-heartedly without self-reproach.[1]

In her early novels Jane Austen consistently avoided dealing with a mother who could be a genuinely intimate friend of her daughter. Lady Susan, of the unfinished novel, is her daughter's enemy. In *Northanger Abbey* the mother is busy with the household and the younger children. In *Sense and Sensibility* she herself has to be guided and kept in hand by her daughter's sounder judgment. In *Pride and Prejudice* she is Mrs. Bennet. In *Mansfield Park* she is a slattern whom the heroine only visits once in

[1]This is, needless to say, only a very small part of the unconscious significance which such stories may have for a reader. Most obviously it neglects the relationships of the stepmother and the heroine to the father.

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the course of the novel. In *Emma* the mother is dead and Miss Taylor, her substitute, always remains to some extent the promoted governess. This avoidance may seem strange, but it can be understood as the precaution of a mind which, although in the Cinderella situation, is still too sensitive and honest to offer as a complete portrait the half-truth of the idealised dead mother.

But in *Persuasion* she does approach the problem which is latent here. She puts her heroine in the Cinderella setting, and so heightens her need for affection. And then in Lady Russell she provides a godmother, not fairy but human, with whom Anne Elliot can have much the relationship of a daughter with a greatly loved, but humanly possible, mother. Jane Austen then goes on to face the implications of such a relationship—and there runs through the whole story a lament for seven years' loss of happiness owing to Anne's having yielded to her godmother's persuasion.

The novel opens with her being completely convinced of the wrongness of the advice she received, and yet strongly attached to Lady Russell still and unable to blame her. Her attitude is, and throughout the book remains, curiously unresolved. 'She did not blame Lady Russell, she did not blame herself, for having been guided by her; but she felt that were any young person in similar circumstances to apply to her for counsel, they would never receive any of such certain immediate wretchedness, such uncertain future good.' But for all that the rest of the book shows Anne repeatedly resisting fresh advice from her godmother and being completely vindicated in the upshot.

This might mean that Anne was a repetition of the earlier heroines, detached by her good sense and sound principles from the inferior standards of those about her. That would be true of her relations with her father and eldest sister. But she had no such easy detachment from her godmother. Lady Russell was near enough to the ideal mother to secure Anne's affection, to make her long for the comfort of yielding to her judgment. This satisfaction—the secure submission to a parent who seems completely adequate—was denied Anne by her superior judgment. She was strong enough to retain the insight that separated her from Lady Russell—they never mentioned the episode in the years that followed and neither knew what the other felt about it—but she never came to feel her partial detachment from

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her as anything but a loss. Nor could she ever regret having yielded to Lady Russell's advice, even though she regretted that the advice had been so mistaken. At the end of the story, reverting to the old dilemma, she tells the lover whom she has now regained:

> 'I have been thinking over the past, and trying to judge of the right and wrong—I mean with regard to myself; and I must believe that I was right, much as I suffered from it—that I was perfectly right in being guided by the friend whom you will love better than you do now. To me, she was in the place of a parent. Do not mistake me, however. I am not saying that she did not err in her service. It was, perhaps, one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the event decides and for myself, I certainly never should, in any circumstances of tolerable similarity, give such advice. But I mean that I was right in submitting to her, and that if I had done otherwise, I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement than I did even in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my conscience.'

It is in *Persuasion* that Jane Austen fingers what is probably the tenderest spot for those who identify themselves with Cinderella: she brings the idealised mother back to life and admits that she is no nearer to perfection than the mothers of acute and sensitive children generally are.

This attempt to suggest a slightly different emphasis in the reading of Jane Austen is not offered as a balanced appraisal of her work. It is deliberately lop-sided, neglecting the many points at which the established view seems adequate. I have tried to underline one or two features of her work that claim the sort of readers who sometimes miss her—those who would turn to her not for relief and escape but as a formidable ally against things and people which were to her, and still are, hateful.

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'ATHALIE' AND THE DICTATORS

I.

THE twelve years' silence that followed the production of *Phèdre* is one of the most curious and intriguing of all literary problems. The critic is confronted with the spectacle of a great poet at the height of his powers deliberately turning his back on the art that had made him famous and refusing not only to write, but also to take any further interest in literature. This decison was the outcome of a personal crisis and since the crisis had a decisive influence on *Athalie* no account of Racine's final period is satisfactory without some discussion of the events which led to it.

Phèdre was produced at the beginning of February, 1677, and was a complete failure. The failure was not due to any flaw in that incomparable poem or to mere caprice on the part of the public. It was skilfully engineered by Racine's enemies. It is doubtful whether any other French writer of the same eminence has aroused more antipathy than Racine. He had been the constant victim of professional jealousy and malicious intrigue, but this time matters were carried to unprecedented lengths. As soon as it became known that he was at work on *Phèdre,* the Duchesse de Bouillon commissioned a wretched hack named Pradon to write a play on the same theme, and both works were produced simultaneously. Similar tactics had been employed with *Iphigénie,* but this time nothing was left to chance. The Duchess bought up most of the seats for the first six nights at both theatres, and while Pradon's work was played to a house filled to capacity with her minions, Racine's was played before empty benches.

This prank is said to have cost the Duchess 15,000 *livres,* but its success was complete. Racine was haughty and irritable and bitterly resented any sort of criticism of his work. He had had a good deal to put up with, but in the past he had generally outmatched his enemies. The Prefaces to the tragedies are full of

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biting comments on the folly and ignorance of critics. Their miserable, halting epigrams provoked devastating retorts which were sometimes out of all proportion to the offence and in which we detect a savage pleasure in the infliction of pain.

The collapse of *Phèdre* was followed by the usual bitter exchange of epigrams, but the poet's heart does not seem to have been in the battle. This time he capitulated. He turned his back on his enemies, proceeded to compose his differences with Port-Royal and talked of becoming a Carthusian. He allowed himself to be dissuaded from this extreme course by his confessor who counselled marriage. The elegant courtier, who had been the lover of two of the most famous actresses of the day, chose what must seem a strange companion. *'L'amour ni l'intérêt n'eurent part de ce choix,'* wrote Louis Racine of his father's marriage to Catharine de Romanet. His wife was a staid, middle-class lady; she was plain and devout, proved an excellent wife and mother, but had little sensibility for the arts. It is generally believed that she never read her husband's works either from lack of interest or on account of religious scruples. The marriage was celebrated on 1st June, 1677, less than three months after the disaster, and for the next twelve years Racine devoted himself to the duties of a *père de famille*.

These facts have been variously interpreted by writers of widely differing views. Some have attributed the silence to religious scruples, others to disgust with the literary coteries, and others still to the fact that Racine had nothing more to say. It is probable that all these interpretations contain a measure of truth, but no one of them alone can provide an explanation of all the facts. The reasons for the decision must be sought in an unusual *combination* of circumstances. I think that it can be said that the brutality of the attack on *Phèdre* provided the shock that was needed to set in motion certain latent psychological factors which might otherwise have remained inactive.

It must be remembered that at the time of his marriage Racine was in his thirty-eighth year. It is an age at which surprising things can happen. Men who have led disorderly lives sometimes feel the need of stability or of committing themselves *irrevocably* to a particular course of action; and this need often assumes the form of a choice between two extremes leading in

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opposite directions. It thus happens that some men—particularly men of letters approaching their fortieth year—who have been indifferent Christians or unbelievers all their lives suddenly undergo a violent conversion, while others make a final break with the Faith. Some who have led irreproachable domestic lives fall a victim to 'the midday demon,' while others who like Racine have been profligates become the model husbands of unattractive women. It is also an age at which men who have led stormy, quarrelsome lives suddenly yearn for peace and quietness and simply give in.

No one to-day doubts the sincerity of Racine's religious convictions, but the grace of conversion does not exclude the human element. The way is often prepared by things which seem at first to have little to do with religion and conversion is nearly always coloured by the milieu of the convert. M. François Mauriac is probably correct in suggesting that in the case of Racine the gesture of submission preceded grace. In his secular plays he had recorded the disintegration of society, had probed the maladies of the individual soul and exposed the brittleness of religious belief, honour and morality in conflict with sexual passion without troubling about a constructive solution of the problems involved. He may well have wondered where this was leading him and it is not surprising that he should have turned in his search for security to the religion of his youth. He was influenced by other considerations as well. He had been brought up in an atmosphere of the most rigid puritanism, but his was an exceptionally sensual nature which had been indulged to the full since the breach with Port-Royal. His critics have commented on his preoccupation with sin and temptation in *Phèdre* and Jules Lemaître went as far as to call it the first stage in his conversion. Now *Phèdre* is not the simple drama of good and evil that Racine contrived to suggest in his Preface. There is an unmistakable element of complicity in that magnificent study of sexual mania, a boldness in the exploration of erotic fantasy which point to a deep-seated conflict in the mind of the poet. Racine had hovered between God and Eros and the weariness of the old *roué* and the ugly circumstances of the death of Mlle. du Parc[1] may well have

[1]It is said that she died as the result of abortion and that Racine was the father of the child.

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played their part in his final choice. It must never be forgotten that he was a man of violent extremes. His Jansenist upbringing had left an indelible impress on his personality and a complete break was impossible. It is only natural that the imperious claims of Port-Royal should have reasserted themselves at a time when his career as a dramatist seemed to be foundering and that his conversion should have taken the form of a return to the strict Jansenism of his youth. There was nothing in Catholic teaching to prevent him from continuing his work as a poet, but there was a great deal in the Jansenist interpretation of that teaching which had openly denounced playwrights as 'poisoners of souls.'

The importance of Racine's life for an understanding of his later work can now be seen. His conversion produced a change of direction; his outlook became positive instead of negative. Although there does not seem at first to be any evidence in his plays to support the view that he had nothing more to say, it is difficult to believe that the new outlook and his growing sense of responsibility for his writings could have been reconciled with the writing of more plays in the manner of *Phèdre,* or that the change could be accomplished without a break in his work. A writer who has passed through a crisis of this sort clearly needs time to settle down again before he can translate his new approach to contemporary problems into poetry. The distance that Racine travelled can only be seen by a close comparison between *Phèdre* and *Athalie.* In spite of Lemaître's comment, *Athalie* is not a development of tendencies that are present in *Phèdre;* it is a new departure in Racine's work. Those critics who have lamented the effects of his conversion and the masterpieces which might otherwise have been written between *Phèdre* and *Esther* were perhaps short-sighted. It is certain that without conversion there would have been no *Athalie,* and no one who has studied the play attentively will feel that the twelve years' silence was a waste of time.

Whether Racine would have turned his conversion to such good account without some sort of outside stimulus may be doubted. Fortunately, the stimulus was provided in a way that could scarcely remain without effect. In 1689 he was invited by Madame de Maintenon to devote his leisure moments to writing *' quelque espèce de poème moral ou historique dont l'amour fût*

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entièrement banni.' It did not matter, she said, whether the poem conformed to the rules, provided that ' *il contribuât aux vues qu'elle avait de divertir les demoiselles de Saint-Cyr en les instruisant.*'

Racine carried out his instructions to the letter. I have sometimes felt tempted to describe *Esther* as 'slight,' but the term is inexact. It is not of the same calibre as the great tragedies, but it is clearly the work of a master who was at the height of his powers and who has done exactly what he set out to do. The brutality of the Bible-story is discreetly toned down and the play has a freshness—one might almost call it a fragrance—which is unique in Racine's poetry. It is not a religious play in the same sense as *Athalie;* it does not possess the richness and complexity of that work; but it expresses the awakening of the young girls to the realities of the life about them. The combination of freshness and gravity that one feels in the lines:

> Jeunes et tendres fleurs par le sort agitées,
> Sous un ciel étranger comme moi transplantées.

gives the play its special charm. It is the only one of Racine's plays which deserves the misused epithet ' tender.'

Esther was performed by the young ladies of Saint-Cyr before the King and his Court with such a success that the invitation was repeated. Racine could never resist success, and the invitation was accepted with alacrity. He put all his powers into *Athalie*, but the result was entirely different. The play was performed on two or three occasions only in Madame de Maintenon's room without music or décors, and when it was printed it attracted no attention. It is said that Madame de Maintenon considered that it was unsuitable for Saint-Cyr and this point of view is certainly understandable; but she may have been prompted by other considerations—by the frontal attack on absolute monarchy in Act III Sc. 5, and by the author's open sympathy with the Jansenist cause. Her reasons are not perhaps of great importance. For Racine success was success and failure was failure. Once more he turned his back on the theatre and this time there was no recall.

II.

There is a tendency, particularly among French critics, to treat Racine's plays as great poems suspended in a vacuum with-

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out any relation to the age in which they were written, as the supreme example of ' impersonal ' poetry. This approach implies a view of poetry which is fundamentally unsound. A poem is always in some degree an expression of the personal experience of the poet. In different periods, which for convenience sake are called ' classic ' and ' romantic,' the personal element has varied ; but the view that personal experience played no part in seventeenth century tragedy is mistaken. A dramatic poet's characters are always symbols—sometimes unconscious symbols—of the poet's personal interests. None of Racine's plays—least of all *Athalie*—is an exception to the rule. We must judge a poet's work to some extent by the breadth and universality of his symbols, or to put it in another way, by the degree of correspondence between his personal sensibility and the sensibility of his age. *Athalie* is the most personal of Racine's works and it is the greatest. It marks a definite extension of his sensibility to fresh regions; it reveals a wider and more mature grasp of experience than any of its predecessors. The religious element played a vital part in this extension of sensibility. For *Athalie* is a religious play in the fullest sense of the term; it is not like *Polyeucte* a great play which happened to have a religious subject.

The theme of *Athalie* is taken *from IV Kings xi.* When her son, Ochozias King of Judah, died, Athalia killed his lawful descendants and made herself Queen. But one of them escaped her. His infant son Joas was rescued by Josaba, the King's sister and wife of the High Priest, and brought up secretly as her own child in the Temple. Athalia, who had become a Baal-worshipper and persecuted the priests of God, was killed by the Levites and Joas crowned King.

Out of these simple materials Racine produced a play which was a searching criticism of the religious and political situation in France towards the close of the seventeenth century. I have drawn attention in another place[2] to one striking difference between the work of Corneille and Racine. In Racine's secular plays there is little trace of the conception of a social order which dominates Corneille's greatest plays and gives them their peculiar strength, for the simple reason that this order was in the process of disappearing, of giving way to an unbridled individualism. Racine

[2]'The Great and Good Corneille' in *Scrutiny,* December 1938.

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saw that the only alternative to chaos was the rebuilding of society on a religious basis ; but even in *Athalie* the difference persists. Racine's conversion did not bring a facile solution to his difficulties; it was no social panacea, it was a source of strength because it brought a fresh realisation of the magnitude and gravity of the problem which confronted him. In his last play he looks wistfully back to the time when a sane order was an established fact; he sees that it has been preserved in a fragmentary state by one section of the community and he considers the means of extending it to the rest of society. But the order remains potential; it is not actually realised in the life of the community *as a whole* as it is in Corneille's work.

With this reservation it can be said that the theme of *Athalie* is a conflict between two orders—between the religious order based on *loi* and a pagan order based on force and bolstered up by ignoble superstition. It is a conflict between the Divine order realizing itself in time and space through human agency, which alone can ensure true freedom, and an unscrupulous lust for power which tries to uproot the religion which stands in the way of its aims. The play is only complete with the destruction of the corrupt order and the restoration of ' law.' For Racine the only guarantee of law lay in the union of Throne and Altar in the person of the Priest-King—in Joas who was a vital link in the succession from King David to Our Lord.

Athalie has long been regarded as a *pièce à clef*. When it was published one of Racine's allies, the Père Quesnel, remarked with satisfaction that it contained *'des portraits où l'on n'a pas besoin de dire à qui ils ressemblent.'* Attempts have been made by French critics to discover the 'key,' but this sort of detective work is likely to be unprofitable and misleading. *Athalie* is not, as Sainte-Beuve alleged, ' a simple and powerful story'; still less is it a gallery of contemporary portraits or a 'philosophical play' in which ghostly characters debate abstract problems. The characters are poetic creations, are the vehicles of a poetic criticism of the contemporary situation which is pre-eminently concrete and particular. Racine may well have had Bossuet in mind when he drew his portrait of Joad, but Joad's importance has nothing to do with his resemblance to Bossuet or to the Old Testament model. It lies solely in the fact that he represents a particular element in

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the pattern of the play.

One of the most interesting characters is Athalie's general. Abner, whom the High Priests calls *l'un des soutiens de ce tremblant État,* occupies an intermediate position between the warring orders. He tries to combine fidelity to the true religion with loyalty to the person whom he believes, until the last Act, to be his lawful sovereign. It is not unduly fanciful to see him as the representative of Racine's own point of view, to see in his struggle a reflection of the difficulties experienced by Racine in trying to work out the relation of the individual to the social order. It is into his mouth that the great opening speech is placed ;

> Oui, je viens dans son temple adorer l'Éternel.
> Je viens, selon l'usage antique et solennel,
> Célébrer avec vous la fameuse journée
> Où sur le mont Sina la loi nous fut donnée.
> Que les temps sont changés! Sitôt que de ce jour
> La trompette sacrée annonçait le retour,
> Du temple, orné partout de festons magnifiques,
> Le peuple saint en foule inondait les portiques;
> Et tous, devant l'autel avec ordre introduits,
> De leurs champs dans leurs mains portant les nouveaux fruits,
> Au Dieu de l'univers consacraient ces prémices.
> Les prêtres ne pouvaient suffire aux sacrifices.
> L'audace d'une femme, arrêtant ce concours,
> En des jours ténébreux a changé ces beaux jours.
> D'adorateurs zélés à peine un petit nombre
> Ose des premiers temps nous retracer quelque ombre.
> Le reste pour son Dieu montre un oubli fatal,
> Ou même, s'empressant aux autels de Baal,
> Se fait initier à ses honteux mystères,
> Et blasphème le nom qu'ont invoqué leurs pères.

I have sometimes wondered what makes this opening speech so extraordinarily impressive. I think that it is the certainty with which the great positive values are apprehended, a physical sense of them crowding in upon us. The intense reality of the order that has been lost underlines the tragic contrast of present chaos. The accent falls on four words: *Éternel, solennel, loi, ordre.*

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They are not abstract terms; they stand for a clearly defined and deeply felt way of life. 'The chief or rather the only character in *Athalie*,' wrote Sainte-Beuve, 'is God.' The Presence of God is felt mysteriously all through the play shaping the destinies of the players and the *Éternel-solennel* recurs like a theme in music. The solemn ceremonial and the *festons magnifiques* give it a concrete embodiment and the Presence becomes almost tangible. God's 'law' is felt to be supreme and its claims paramount. It is the persuasive effect of 'law' that brings Abner to the Temple on the feast day; its significance is reinforced by the rich traditional associations of *antique* and the reference to the offering of the first fruits stresses its connection with the life of the common people working on the soil. Religion is not an abstract system, but something deeply rooted in the conscience of the community which has a practical influence on their lives. It is the recognition of 'law' that creates 'order.' Order consists in the realization that human life tends towards God. The offering of the first fruits again drives the point home and the homely image of the priests shepherding the faithful into the Temple in an 'orderly fashion' makes us feel that the creation of order is organic, is taking place before our eyes.

When Racine compared the splendour of the past with the distress and division of the present, the crowds who once flocked to the magnificently decorated Temple with the scattered, wavering remnant of the faithful who still remained, he was thinking not only of the disruption of the Church at the Reformation, but also of the persecution of Port-Royal in his own day and this accounts for the intensely personal feeling of the lines. When he wrote *Athalie*, Racine was openly identified with the Jansenist cause; he was a member of a persecuted sect within the Catholic Church, and he must have been aware of a parallel between the *peuple saint* in the play and Jansenist community at Port-Royal. He felt that the task of preserving the true faith and of restoring *loi* belonged to Jansenism. In the play the Temple is the last stronghold of religion in a pagan world, is the place from which the saviour (Joas) will emerge, and for Racine this was precisely the role of Port-Royal. 'Temples' and 'palaces'—using the words in a wide sense—had played a large part in his own life. He had been brought up at Port-Royal, but had abandoned the 'temple'

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for the 'palaces' of Louis XIV. When, in his earlier plays, the characters are described as wandering purposelessly in the vast, empty 'palaces'—

> Errante et sans dessin, je cours dans ce palais—

he seems to point a contrast between the disorder and confusion of the individual life and an order of society which had ceased to be a real order and degenerated into formalism. When the characters escaped from the 'palace' by 'a secret way,' he was perhaps thinking of his own escape from the restrictions of Port-Royal. There can be little doubt that Abner's return to the Temple symbolises the return of the prodigal but repentant Racine to the bosom of Port-Royal; and the conviction is strengthened by the contrast between the Temple of God and the 'palace' of Athalie to which she tries in vain to entice the infant Joas. But Joas avoids making Racine's own mistake!

Although Sainte-Beuve was undoubtedly right in emphasising the Presence of God in *Athalie,* his generalisation is based on an incomplete analysis of the religious elements in the play. They are not simple but complex. There is the hard, ' official ' religion —the religion of the orthodox—which is represented by the High Priest, and the uneasy, 'personal' religion which breaks through in the speeches of Abner and still more in the choruses.

The nostalgic note, which is discernible in the opening speech, becomes more pronounced as the play proceeds. In the lines:

> O divine, ô charmante loi!
> O justice! ô bonté suprême!
> Que de raisonis, quelle douceur extrême
> D'engager à Dieu son amour et sa foi!

the hard, precise connotations of *loi, justice* and *raison* dissolve into the fragile exotic beauty of *charmante* and *douceur,* and the action of *engager* becomes submerged in a voluptuous mystical ecstasy. In the description of David praising God the process is the same.

> Au lieu des cantiques *charmants*
> Où David t'exprimait ses *saints ravissements,*
> Et bénissait son Dieu, son seigneur, et son père,

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Sion, *chère* Sion, que dis-tu quand tu vois
Louer le dieu de l'impie étrangère,
Et blasphèmer le nom qu'ont adoré tes rois?

The warrior king is obscured by the mystic king lost in his *saints ravissements*.

The pronouncements of the High Priest are in a different style. His is a militant religion. He chides Abner and the Jews for their weakness and want of faith and glories in a God of vengeance.

Faut-il, Abner, faut-il vous rappeler le cours
Des prodiges fameux accomplis en nos jours?
Des tyrans d'Israël les célèbres disgrâces,
Et Dieu trouvé fidèle en toutes ses menaces ;
L'impie Achab détruit, et de son sang trempé
Le champ que par le meurtre il avait usurpé;
Près de ce champ fatal Jézable immolée,
Sous les pieds des chevaux cette reine foulée,
Dans son sang inhumain les chiens désaltérés,
Et de son corps hideux les membres déchirés . . .

The High Priest also represents the virile, practical element in religion. He does at one point of the play go into a trance, but his principal work is to bring about the destruction of Athalie by skilful strategy rather than by prayer. The practical element can be seen in the staccato orders which he gives to his assistants:

Qu'à l'instant hors du temple elle soit emmenée;
Et que la sainteté n'en soit point profanée . . .

and perhaps in the short and brutal announcement of one of his lieutenants:

Mathan est égorgé.

The skill with which Racine wove these diverse strands into the texture of his play gives it its subtle and varied beauty and also its tragic urgency. It helps us to appreciate the complexity of the problem that confronted the poet. The High Priest and Abner are both concerned in their different ways with the restoration of *loi* in the world. The High Priest stands not only

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for officialdom, but also for the institutional element in religion which is the necessary corollary to the mystical element of the choruses—as all reputable theologians would agree. Racine may not have cared for what Joad stood for, but he saw clearly that the goal could only be reached by a combination of practical action and contemplation. It is significant that the High Priest is always regarded as a means to an end. With the crowning of Joas and the death of Athalie his work is done and and he becomes at once a figure of less importance. We may suppose that in the new order which was to emerge from the existing state of anarchy he would have been a minor functionary, a sort of ecclesiastical policeman who would keep his eye on the machinery. For the new order was to be centred not merely in the Priest-King, but in the child of tender years whom Racine significantly describes as:

> Triste reste de nos rois,
> Chère et dernière fleur d'une tige si belle,
> Hélas! sous le couteau d'une mère cruelle
> Te verrons-nous tomber une secondes fois?

III.

'Elle a pour sujet Joas reconnu et mis sur le trône'; wrote Racine in the Preface to *Athalie,* 'et j'aurais dû dans les règles l'intituler *Joas.* Mais la plupart du monde n'en ayant entendu parler que sous le nom d'*Athalie,* je n'ai pas jugé à propos de la leur présenter sous un autre titre, puisque d'ailleurs Athalie y joue un personnage si considérable, et que c'est sa mort qui terminera la pièce.'

We may wonder whether Racine altogether believed what he said in his Preface. He was inclined to use the Prefaces to tell the public what it ought to think about the plays. He may have considered it politic to emphasise the religious element in *Athalie* as he had emphasised the moral aspect of *Phèdre* in the Preface to that play. Racine's religion was remarkable for its intense preoccupation with sin; he did not allow his search for a constructive solution of the problem to diminish his passionate interest in evil, in the forces that were undermining the religious order. In

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Athalie, as in the other plays, one of his principal interests is the disintegration of the personality of his 'heroine.' Athalie herself clearly belongs to the tragic sisterhood of the other plays. There is a world of difference between the simple Biblical character who is struck down by the servants of an avenging God and the complex 'modern woman' who is studied with such marvellous psychological insight.

Racine is concerned, as always, with what M. François Mauriac has called *une femme au déclin de l'âge,* with a woman who has reached a crisis in her life. It is not the history of a single event, but the culmination of a series of psychological events. The whole of Athalie's past life is evoked in the same way as Phèdre's; all her actions have a place in the final pattern and are seen as successive stages leading logically to the final tragedy. The superiority of this over Racine's other works lies perhaps in the greater significance of the issues involved.

Athalie is presented as a ruthless, inhuman monster who has usurped the throne of the rightful King and who did not stop at murder in order to attain her aims. She has broken with the historic faith and slaughtered its priests. For like all despots she has found religion the most serious obstacle to the rule of force and superstition the most potent ally. She has carried all before her and at the opening of the play she is faced only with a remnant of the faithful under the leadership of the High Priest who is openly hostile to the usurper. She prepares to 'liquidate' this remnant by the usual methods, but—to the surprise of friends and enemies alike—she hesitates. Her methods of violence have failed to create an *interior* unity and her personality cannot resist the destructive forces that she herself has released. From the beginning of the play she is seen under two different aspects. Josabeth describes her on the day of the attempted murder of Joas:

> Un poignard à la main, l'implacable Athalie
> Au carnage animait ses barbares soldats.

This image, which has burnt itself into the imagination of the faithful, is suddenly replaced by an alternative. In his opening speech Abner declares:

> Enfin depuis deux jours la superbe Athalie
> Dans un sombre chagrin paraît ensevelie.

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Then her henchman Mathan says of her:

> Ami, depuis deux jours je ne la connais plus.
> Ce n'est plus cette reine éclairée, intrépide,
> Elevée au-dessus de son sexe timide,
> Qui d'abord accablait ses ennemis surpris,
> Et d'un instant perdu connaissait tout le prix.
> La peur d'un vain remords trouble cette grande âme:
> Elle flotte, elle hésite ; en un mot, elle est femme.

The hard indomitable qualities implied in *superbe, implacable, intrépide* dissolve into the *noir chagrin,* the *vain remords*: instead of action, there is hesitation and indecision. Athalie completes the evidence. In the midst of her furious outbursts, she is suddenly overcome by a sense of her own loneliness:

> Et moi, reine sans coeur, fille sans amitié.

When confronted with the child whom she does not know is Joas she says:

> Quel prodige nouveau me trouble et m'embarrasse?
> La douceur de sa voix, son enfance, sa grâce,
> Fait insensiblement à mon inimitié
> Succéder . . . Je serais sensible à la pitié?

It is of the essence of despotism that the ruler builds up a system which is based on the suppression of the natural human virtues, a system which rapidly develops into an unending process of destruction. In *Athalie* the personal tragedy of the despot is seen to lie in the fact that it is the return to the natural human virtues that actually leads to the collapse of the system. The despot is a human being and the remains of his humanity prove to be his undoing.

It is important to realize that *Athalie* is not the study of an isolated individual in the same sense as Racine's other plays. He sets Athalie in her proper milieu and one of the most impressive things in the play is the analysis of the progressive moral deterioration of her entourage and its influence on her policy. The bearing of this point on our present perplexities is obvious and it is worth examining Racine's handling of it in detail. To do so we must compare Mathan's speech in Act III Sc. 3 with the High Priest's attack on absolute monarchy in Act IV Sc. 3.

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Ami, peux-tu penser que d'un zèle frivole
Je me laisse aveugler par une vaine idole,
Pour un fragile bois que malgré mon secours
Les vers sur son autel consument tous les jours?
Né ministre du Dieu qu'en ce temple on adore,
Peut-être que Mathan le servirait encore,
Si l'amour des grandeurs, la soif de commander,
Avec son joug étroit pouvait s'accommoder.
Que'est-il besoin, Nabal, qu'à tes yeux je rappelle
De Joad et de moi la fameuse querelle,
Quand j'osai contre lui disputer l'encensoir,
Mes brigues, mes combats, mes pleurs, mon désespoir?
Vaincu par lui, j'entrai dans une autre carrière,
Et mon âme à la cour s'attacha toute entière.
J'approchai par degré de l'oreille des rois,
Et bientôt en oracle on érigea ma voix.
J'étudial leur coeur, je flattai leurs caprices,
Je leur semai de fleurs le bord des précipices.
Près de leurs passions rien ne me fut sacré;
De mesure et de poids je changeais à leur gré.
Autant que de Joad l'inflexible rudésse
De leur superbe oreille offensait la mollesse,
Autant je les charmais par ma dextérité,
Dérobant à leurs yeux la triste vérité,
Prêtant à leurs fureurs des couleurs favorables,
Et prodigue surtout du sang deus misérables.

Mathan is a richly ironical creation. He stands along among Racine's characters and to find anything comparable in French tragedy we have to turn to Félix in *Polyeucte* and Prusias in *Nicomède*. For by using his observation of the political scene Racine created something which was a perfect vehicle for his criticism of the French Court. Mathan is the measure of the corruption of the life of the time; the weaknesses of human nature are set in their true perspective, enabling Racine to lay bare the roots of the evil.

The passage depends for its effect on the contrast between the hard, virile qualities suggested by *joug étroit, inflexible, rudesse,* and the sinister, subterranean suggestions of *flattais,*

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étudiai, mollesse, dextérité. The worms 'consuming' the idol indicate the moral softness of the sovereign and look forward to *offensait la mollesse.* Mathan alludes with cynical humour to his own softness when he declares that he was unable to submit to the discipline implied in *joug étroit.* The image of the worms eating the wood of the idol is reinforced by *étudiai leur coeur,* for Mathan's method of insinuating himself into the confidence of the sovereign is identical with that of the worms and by implication the sovereign becomes a *vaine idole*—at any rate in the eyes of the 'enlightened.' The rhyme links *caprices* and *précipices.* For it is the unbridled passion which cannot submit to the *joug étroit* which contains the germ of dissolution. As a final devastating comment, there is the fact that Mathan's defection to Baal was caused by some trivial dispute over the censer.

> Loin du trône nourri, de ce fatal honneur,
> Hélas! vous ignorez le charme empoisonneur.
> De l'absolu pouvoir vous ignorez l'ivresse,
> Et des lâches flatteurs la voix enchanteresse.
> Bientôt ils vous diront que les plus saintes lois,
> Maîtresses du vil peuple, obéissent aux rois;
> Qu'un roi n'a d'autre frein que sa volonté même;
> Qu'il doit immoler tout à sa grandeur suprême,
> Qu'aux larmes, au travail, le peuple est condamné,
> Et d'un sceptre de fer veut être gouverné;
> Que s'il n'est opprimé, tôt ou tard il opprime.
> Ainsi de piège en piège, et d'abîme en abîme,
> Corrompant de vos moeurs l'aimable pureté,
> Ils vous feront enfin haïr la vérité,
> Vous peindront la vertu sous une affreuse image.
> Hélas! ils ont des rois égaré le plus sage.

I have already suggested that the theme of *Athalie* is not the study of the destructive forces at work in an otherwise stable order, but a conflict between two separate orders. One of them is wholly corrupt and must be destroyed as a preliminary step towards the restoration of 'law.' The other contains the possibility of a stable order, but stability can only be achieved provided that certain conditions are fulfilled. Joad's admirably democratic

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speech is an astonishingly courageous criticism of the Court of Louis XIV; it is a description of the manner in which sovereignty degenerates into dictatorship which is of exceptional interest at the present time; but it only becomes fully intelligible when read in the light of Mathan's pronouncement. It is a statement of the problem from a different angle. Its intention is wholly constructive; it is a serious warning against dangers which may lead to a repetition of the disasters that overtook the *peuple saint* under the rule of Athalie. There is the same contrast between the *plus saintes lois* and the subterranean associations of *charme empoisonneur, voix enchanteresse, piège* and *abîme*. The effect, however, is to correct Mathan by restoring the values that he deliberately undermined. The *amour des grandeurs* is stigmatised as *ce fatal honneur;* the ' passions ' and the ' caprices ' are seen to possess a *charme empoisonneur* which inevitably corrodes what is best in civilisation, which leads to an *ivresse* that is incompatible with *pureté* or *vérité*. Mathan's is the *voix enchanteresse* ; he is one of the *lâches flatteurs* concealing the dangers, removing the *frein* from the supreme will of the sovereign. This time the situation is looked at objectively and the words are given a different value. The substitution of *frein* for *joug étroit* is an example. In other words, the elaborate subterfuge, the flowers strewn on the edge of the precipice, the *couleurs favorables* which hide truth, are cleared away and the full rottenness of the situation is revealed and judged.

It is interesting to notice that Athalie and her minions (like some of the most notorious of their modern exemplars) are *apostates*. They have abandoned religion and set up a alien system in its place. It is characteristic of these substitute religions, as we know to our cost, that they bear a close resemblance to the thing that they replace. At bottom, Athalie is a woman in whom the habits of mind of a Jansenist have survived the repudiation of the faith and this is true of her entourage. They have a dogmatic system; they have the some uneasy consciences[3], and they are painfully aware of human weaknesses; but in their system the normal values are turned upside down and it is this that leads to disaster. It is true that there is no ' love interest ' in *Athalie,* but Athalie's unbelief is not less corrosive than Roxane's passion for her brother-in-law or Phèdre's for her stepson. Her collapse is

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an interior collapse, and though she is actually killed by the Levites, her physical death is simply the consummation of the interior collapse.

IV.

Athalie's great speech in Act II Sc. 5 is the centre of the play and must be examined in detail. For convenience sake it can be divided into three movements. The first is from l.6 to l.26 ; the second from l.27 to l.48 ; and the third from l.50 to l.88.

Prêtez-moi, l'un et l'autre une oreille attentive.
Je ne veux point ici rappeler le passé,
Ni vous rendre raison du sang que j'ai versé.
Ce que j'ai fait, Abner, j'ai cru le devoir faire.
Je ne prends point pour juge un peuple téméraire.
Quoi que son insolence ait osé publier,
Le ciel même a pris soin de me justifier.
Sur d'éclatants succès ma puissance établie
A fait jusqu'aux deux mers respecter Athalie.
Par moi Jérusalem goûte un calme profond.
Le Jourdain ne voit plus l'Arabe vagabond,
Ni l'altier Philistin, par d'éternels ravages,
Comme au temps de vos rois, désoler ses rivages ;
Le Syrien me traite et de reine et de soeur;
Enfin de ma maison le perfide oppresseur,
Qui devait jusqu'à moi pousser sa barbarie,
Jéhu, le fier Jéhu, tremble en Samarie.
De toutes parts pressé par un puissant voisin
Que j'ai su soulever contre cet assassin,
Il me laisse en ces lieux souveraine maîtresse.
Je jouissais en paix du fruit de ma sagesse.

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[3]In the speech from which I have already quoted, Mathan says:

Toutefois, je l'avoue, en ce comble de gloire,
Du Dieu que j'ai quitté l'importune mémoire
Jette encore en mon âme un reste de terreur ;
Et c'est ce qui redouble et nourit ma fureur.
Heureux si, sur son temple achevant ma vengeance.
Je puis convaincre enfin sa haine d'impuissance.

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Racine was severely criticised in the nineteenth century on the ground that the great monologues were not an expression of spontaneous feeling, but the result of artful contrivance. It was said that they created the impression of being carefully prepared in advance and that this gave the whole of Racine's work a stilted air. This passage, which is a particularly good illustration of the structure of the great *tirades*, is a complete answer to the charge. It is not a bald summary of past events, a frigid account of old emotions; it is part of a carefully thought out method of relating Athalie's past life to the drama of the moment. The emotions not only come to life in the retelling; they are deliberately modified and fall into their place in the pattern of the play. One might almost call the method a critical method because it involved a judgment on the emotions expressed. It has the advantage of bringing the whole of Athalie's life within the scope of the play so that its ultimate meaning is at once perceived. This is what is meant by saying that the tragedy of Athalie is not an isolated event, but the culmination of a series of psychological events.

This speech is Athalie's apologia and is addressed to Mathan and to Abner. It is important to distinguish in the first movement between the speaker's *intention* and the actual *effect* of her oration on her hearers, for the two are distinct. She opens on a note of proud disdain and when she declares:

> Je ne veux point ici rappeler le passé,
> Ni vous rendre raison du sang que j'ai versé

she evidently intends to brush aside the past as unimportant; the consonants give the lines an air of brisk determination and the short precise words remind us of a person driving home her point by a series of taps on a table. The next lines appear to be a flat contradiction of this assertion and the contradiction is caused by the pressure of the events forcing themselves into Athalie's mind and refusing to be brushed lightly aside. Line 9 is a concession to Abner and the moral associations of *devoir* are used to excuse Athalie's deeds in his eyes. The reference to *un peuple téméraire* is perhaps an unconscious inversion which reveals Athalie's uneasiness. She cannot admit that she is afraid, but

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instead describes the Jews as *téméraire*. The associations of *devoir* are strengthened by

Le ciel même a pris soin de me justifier

which has the appearance of clinching the argument. 'Heaven itself approves my course.'

Athalie is trying to show that her position is at once ' right ' and ' secure.' She is trying to convince her hearers in order to convince herself. She dwells at some length on her material successes because they are a sign of divine approbation and also because they give her a sense of security. In the lines:

Sur d'éclatants succès ma puissance établie
A fait jusqu'aux deux mers respecter Athalie.

the *établie* has a solid reassuring ring which is at once felt to be hollow and insecure. At the same time there is a shifting of the angle of vision. Athalie adopts an impersonal standpoint and looks at herself (inviting her hearers to do the same) from without. We are to stand back and gaze upon the great Queen whose power is firmly established as far as the two seas.

The position is consolidated by the catalogue of ' successes ' in which the supernatural and the natural are judiciously mingled. ' It is thanks to me that Jerusalem—the Holy City—enjoys a deep calm,' and the *profond* lends its support to *établie*. The peace extends over the whole country. She does not describe her victories over the Arab and the Philistine; she presents us with a *fait accompli*—

Le Jourdain *ne voit plus* . . .

Only the careful manipulation of consonants suggests a faint disturbance which preceded the calm and perhaps indicates the mild exertion that was needed to repress the marauders.

There is a further change at l.19. ' The Syrian treats me as Queen and sister.' Athalie—the 'reine sans coeur, fille sans amitie' —inspires affection as well as respect. For the next six lines the rugged r's and v's give way to the hiss of s's in *pousser, oppresseur, Samarie, puissant, assassin, maîtresse* as Athalie swoops down upon a different and far more formidable enemy. The vague triumphs

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over the hordes of Arabs and Philistines are suddenly exchanged for the uncomfortably precise

> Jéhu, le fier Jéhu, tremble en Samarie.

The reasons for this are interesting. One has the impression that the victories over the Philistines and the Arabs were victories over fantom armies, but Jehu is a different proposition. Jehu was the person who killed Jezabel and the death of Jezabel haunts Athalie from one end of the play to the other. Jehu was an object of hatred and fear, a physical as well as a psychological danger. Athalie tries desperately to convince herself that she has reduced him to impotence so that he cannot repeat his treatment of her mother in her own case.

Then the final picture of Athalie herself:

> Il me laisse en ces lieux souveraine maîtresse.
> Je jouissais en paix de fruit de ma sagesse.

The material triumph is consolidated by *souveraine* and *sagesse,* a word with profoundly religious associations.

I have spoken of the difference between the intention and the effect of the passage. When it is studied closely it is seen to be an elaborate pantomime in which Athalie recounts her triumphs over fantom armies. These fantoms have a deep psychological significance because they are an attempt to exteriorise fears which Athalie cannot name. She tries to reassure herself by describing a victory over imaginary enemies in place of her own collapse in the face of true enemies which she cannot overcome. The *effect* if the passage is therefore to create in the spectator's mind an impression of a precarious peace.

> Mais un trouble importun, vient depuis quelques jours,
> De mes prospérités interrompre le cours.
> Un songe (me devrais-je inquiéter d'un songe?)
> Entretient dans mon coeur un chagrin qui le ronge.
> Je l'évite partout, partout il me poursuit.
> C'était pendant l'horreur d'une profonde nuit.
> Ma mère Jézabel devant moi s'est montrée,
> Comme au jour de sa mort pompeusement parée.
> Ses malheurs n'avaient point abattu sa fierté;

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Même elle avait encor cet éclat emprunté
Dont elle eut soin de peindre et d'orner son visage,
Pour réparer des ans l'irréparable outrage.
Tremble, m-a-t-elle dit, *fille digne de moi.*
Le cruel Dieu des Juifs l'emporte aussi sur toi.
Je te plains de tomber dans ses mains redoutables,
Ma fille. En achevant ces mots épouvantables,
Son ombre vers mon lit a paru se baisser.
Et moi, je lui tendais les mains pour l'embrasser
Mais je n'ai plus trouvé qu'un horrible mélange
D'os et de chairs meurtris, et traînés la fange,
Des lambeaux pleins de sang et des membres affreux,
Que des chiens dévorants se disputaient entre eux.

Athalie's peace reveals its insecurity with the opening lines of the second movement. The material success begins at once to crumble. The punctuation gives the impression of a series of strangled gasps. There is a conflict between Athalie's desire to conceal her dream and a desperate desire to confide in some one, to be reassured.

The crux of the passage and perhaps of the play is the word *songe* and Athalie's voice sinks to a terrified whisper:

Un songe (me-devrais-je inquiéter d'un songe?)

Her fear is powerfully augmented by the word *ronge*. Subterranean influences undermining normal life are one of the principal motifs of the play. The worms ' consume ' the wooden idols; the trickery of Mathan undermines sovereignty; and the dream undermines Athalie's peace of mind.

The celebrated line:

C'était pendant l'horreur d'une profonde nuit.

focusses our whole attention on the dream, gathers up the emotion of the previous twenty lines and concentrates it on a single point. It is a wonderful example of Racine's power of condensation. This line robs the material triumphs, sedulously catalogued in the first movement, of all their reality. For the rest of the play it is the dream world which is the reality, the shadow world of the supernatural which breaks through Athalie's psychological

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armour and destroys her. The terror and darkness suggested by the long, slow syllables of the *profonde nuit* extend over everything. The *calme profond,* for which Athalie had been fighting desperately, changes into another sort of *calme*—a silence in which terror reigns.

In place of the image of the proud and successful Athalie that was built up in the first movement, there arises a different figure. Jezabel is not merely Jezabel; she is Athalie herself. The description of Jezabel has a profoundly ironic significance—ironic because the subterfuge of Athalie's self-portrait is deliberately stripped away. The *pompeusement parée* refers to the insignia royalty—the external symbols—on which Athalie herself has insisted. The décor is seen to be a disguise for her true feelings:

> Même elle avait encor cet éclat emprunté
> Dont elle eut soin de peindre et d'orner son visage,
> Pour réparer des ans l'irréparable outrage.

The unreal, painted figure is Athalie in her precarious and unreal security. The *sagesse* of l.26 is not wisdom at all, but trickery. The hopeless despair behind the *irréparable outrage* gives the passage its profoundly tragic note.

The grim story of Jezabel's violent death has always appealed to the imagination of Christians, and it is evoked more than once in this play. Joad dwells on it with a savage glee because he feels that it is the weak spot in Athalie's defences. Athalie herself refers to it because it has never ceased to prey on her mind until it has become a presage of her own death and this explains the reference to Jehu in the first part of the speech.

Racine certainly intended the dream to be accepted as a supernatural warning, but its working is subjective. We must remember that Racine's Catholicism was essentially a religion of intense subjective manifestations, of tormented and uneasy consciences. The figure of Jezabel has much the same significance in this play as Venus in *Phèdre.*[4] Once the fearful warning:

> Le cruel Dieu des Juifs l'emporte aussi sur toi

[4] *Scrutiny,* March, 1938, page 456.

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—which looks forward to Athalie's last despairing cry

Dieu des Juifs, tu l'emportes!

—has been uttered, Athalie is a beaten woman. Her character disintegrates in precisely the same way as that of the other Racinian heroines.

The process of disintegration is evoked with consummate power in seven lines. One of the things that make the passage effective is the *speed* of the process of disintegration. The painted Jezabel is presented in six lines; in six lines a sickening feeling of collapse is suggested by the poet. Then there is a pause; the painted figure hangs suspended in the darkness illuminated by a harsh, crude light which reveals everything. The warning is uttered; the *fille digne de moi* links the fate of mother and daughter, and the *digne* heightens the macabre comedy of the scene. Then the figure leans dramatically toward Athalie; Athalie raises her arms to embrace it or to assure herself of its reality or perhaps even to obtain some sort of support from it. Suddenly, the figure crumples up leaving only a mass of torn and bloody flesh over which the dogs fight. It is the outward and visible sign of the interior psychological collapse of Racine's heroine which is presented with a *hardiesse* that is without parallel in the whole of his work. It can now be seen that Racine's great monologues are in no sense a frigid recital of past events. His greatness does not lie least in the fact that the change which takes place in the personality of his characters actually happens before our eyes.

The third movement is no less important than the others; but it does not call for same detailed analysis and is too long to set out in full here. It begins with a continuation of the dream:

Dans ce désordre à mes yeux se présente
Un jeune enfant couvert d'une robe éclatante . . .
Mais, lorsque revenant de mon trouble funeste
J'admirais sa douceur, son air noble et modeste,
J'ai senti tout à coup un homicide acier
Que le traître en mon sein a plongé tout entier . . .

The word *désordre* is of the utmost importance because of its many implications. The physical disorder to which it refers is the symbol of psychological disorder, but it is also out of this disorder that

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the new order will emerge. The child in his white robe is set against the bloody confusion of mangled flesh in order to point the contrast between 'innocence' and 'corruption,' 'order' and 'disorder.' He may also be intended to suggest the Christ-Child because there is evidently a contrast between the disorder of the old world and the order of the new world of Christianity. Nor should we overlook the implication that the new world, for all its gentle beginnings, was a revolution that destroyed what was corrupt in the old. The dagger, for example, is probably a foreboding of Athalie's own death, but it is also symbolical of the stealthy way in which her destruction was brought about and of the secret beginnings of Christianity.

The most important lines in the third movement are those describing Athalie's meeting in the Temple with the High Priest and Joas whom she recognises as the child of the dream:

> Le grand prêtre vers moi s'avance avec fureur.
> Pendant qu'il me parlait, ô surprise! ô terreur!
> J'ai vu ce même enfant dont je suis menacée,
> Tel qu'un songe effrayant l'a peint en ma pensée . . .
> Il marchait à côté du grand prêtre.

At this point the two worlds—the dream world and the real world—merge and consolidate against Athalie. The spectacle of the High Priest and Joas making common cause against her suggests better than anything the experience that we get from the last three Acts of the play. We have a sense, which at times becomes almost oppressive, of the hostile forces closing in and paralysing Athalie; but we also have a sense of liberation, a sense of the new order symbolised by Joas taking shape and growing until it transcends the narrow religion of the High Priest.

V.

Although the play closes with the apparent triumph of religion and the reconstruction of the *tremblant État*, Racine was at some pains in his Preface to remind us that this triumph was only temporary. For many years Joas was a model king, but he ended his reign by killing the High Priest of the time in the Temple

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in a fit of anger. This reminder is in perfect keeping with the poet's own attitude. In spite of its satisfactory ending, *Athalie* is shot through and through with an unmistakable note of pessimism. Its nature becomes clear when we compare two brief extracts from Joad's vision of the ultimate downfall of Joas, the Babylonian Captivity and the foundation of the Catholic Church:

> Comment en un vil plomb l'or pur s'est-il changé?
> Quel est dans le lieu saint ce pontife égorgé?
> Pleure, Jérusalem, pleure, cité perfide.
> Des prophètes divins malheureuse homicide!
> De son amour pour toi ton Dieu s'est dépouillé.
> Ton encens à ses yeux est un encens souillé . . .
>
> * * *
>
> Quelle Jérusalem nouvelle
> Sort du fond désert brillante de clartés,
> Et porte sur le front une marque immortelle?
> Peuples de la terre, chantez.
> Jérusalem renaît plus charmante et plus belle . . .

There is a striking contrast between the language used to describe the disasters and the language used to describe the foundation of the Church. The images of destruction are precise and concrete; the images of reconstruction vague and abstract. The dull lead smother the glittering gold; the priest is killed in the sanctuary; the incense is 'soiled.' From these ruins there emerges a strange 'repository' Church. The homely 'lead' and the 'soiled' incense emphasize the curious prettiness of the 'brillante de *clartés*' and of the 'plus *charmante* et plus *belle*' which makes the Church seem beautiful at the expense of strength. It is probable that the imagery was suggested by church decorations, but this merely underlines the fact that the poet was obliged to rely on second-hand images to describe the triumph of religion. For the 'new order' is somehow unreal and its very unreality seems to reflect the poet's own disillusionment and the defeat of his hopes.

I think we must conclude that Racine had come to feel that his great hope—the creation of a truly Christian society on the ruins of the society analysed in the secular plays by a synthesis

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of all the disparate elements—was not destined to be realized. The history of the past hundred and fifty years has abundantly justified his pessimism. It is true that France rid herself of the evils against which Joad solemnly warned Joas in the attack on absolute monarchy; but the cost to Europe as well as to France herself was appalling For the remedy was to a large extent destroyed with the evil and the suffering that this involved has not yet finished. Nor can we overlook the immense responsibility of the Roi Soleil for the fact that the same evil later took root in a neighbouring country.

Comment en un vil plomb l'or pur s'est-il changé?

At a time when we are fighting to preserve the faith and the civilisation that produced Racine's poetry, it is a question that Christians might meditate in a spirit of humility and repentance.

MARTIN TURNELL.

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SEARCHLIGHT ON TIN PAN ALLEY[1]

> '. . . It is only to be hoped that mankind, before it is too late, may turn away from the stupid urge towards quickness, excessive bigness, and possessions, so that great artists may still arise. It is a bad omen for the future that types should exist like R.S. who (even in his art) is a cross between an artist and an industrialist. And yet I almost think that in the new great music machines will be necessary too and will be assigned a share in it.'
>
> Ferrucio Busoni, letter to his wife, November, 1908.

WHEN Hector Berlioz, wild mane of hair streaming in the wind and poised sword glittering in the sunlight, conducted, with this glittering sword as bâton, an enormous orchestra, a chorus of about two thousand and a military band of two hundred in his *Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale*, and then collapsed in tears over the kettle-drums, History, if that ubiquitously shady lady lurked among the multitudes that thronged the Place de la Bastille on that momentous 28th of July in the year 1840, witnessed not only the (temporary) collapse of a great artist but also the end of an epoch in human

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[1] *The George Gershwin Memorial Volume*, edited by Merle Armitage (Longmans, 25/-).
American Jazz Music, by Wilder Hobson (Dent 12/6).
Hot Discography, by Charles Delaunay, with a foreword by Hughes and Lucien Panaissié and Henri Bernard, translated by Ian Munro Smyth (Le Jazz Hot, Paris).
Twenty-One Years of Swing Music, by Lester Hibbs (English Brunswick Record Co.).
Music as a Profession, by Howard Taubman (Scribners Sons, New York).
Music as a Career, by W. R. Anderson (Oxford, 7/6).

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feeling. I do not mean merely that it was the beginning of the end of the glory of the Napoleonic era; but more than this, that it was the last occasion on which great music directly had a hand in the moulding of the evolution of human destiny. Wagner of course, who would have created a New Art and a New World with it, would have liked to think otherwise and in a moment of pique forgot his vivid praise, contemporary with the performance, of Berlioz's strange and stupendous music in making some catty remarks about barrel-organs. In this work, as in the *Grande Messe,* the *Military Te Deum* and possibly *Les Troyens,* Berlioz was indeed a mover and shaker who moved and shook more than kettle-drums and trumpets: but Wagner, although he created a mythology which he would have preferred to call a religion and although the worshippers at his shrine were numerous and faithful, did not help to stir the hearts of men to action as did Berlioz—not to mention the less obvious example of the great composers of the Catholic Church in the days when the connection between music and organized religion was still valid. Wagner's cult was fundamentally an æsthetic, almost a commercial one, a gigantic piece of self-advertisement, and as such the creation of a genius. He did not make history though he was it; Wagner and his monstrous Straussian progeny are the ancestors of the musical movers and shakers of the contemporary scene.

For to-day the composers who take their calling seriously move and shake nothing but themselves and—shall we say?—their initiated clientele. It is true that Albert Roussel, at the request of the 'Président des American bands,' composed in 1932, a piece which he called (in American) *A Glorious Day,* but though I am sure, from all I know of Roussel's music, that it must have been extremely distinguished, urbane and ironic, I'm afraid there can have been in it but little of glory. Our own composers (alas) write marches for coronations which, though they may possibly have moved most unpleasantly the spirit of Sir Edward Elgar, late Master of the King's Music, caused not a flutter in the hearts of the Plain Men (and women) of this Mighty Empire; nor can they honestly be said to have deserved a responsive flutter. Glory is done for and the movers and shakers of to-day are the gods of Tin Pan Alley. I am thinking of the demonstrable effect of music as a social phenomenon, not of its hypothetical effect on men's souls in

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which territory music that is great and straight as a dye will no doubt continue to rally if only with the vigour of desperation. The danger is that ' real ' music might be overwhelmed by the mere numbers of the enemy, for whether we like it or not we to-day live and breathe 'music' to an extent unparalleled in human history. No doubt our Elizabethan forbear, piping his madrigal part at sight while seated at a round table in the picturesque manner of the New English Singers, or twanging his lute while waiting for the barber to finish with the preceding customer, lived music more fully, but we've got him beaten every time when it comes to breathing it. Inhale and exhale, there's no escaping the 2- or 4-chord General Bass of the ukelele or the outworn cliché of the decadently well-tempered piano.

There are several schools of thought as to what ought to be done about it. Some think that there should be a rapprochement between the ' serious ' and the commercial composer somewhat along the lines attempted in the 'twenties by the Parisians, and by Krenek and Kurt Weill; this might be nice if it were at all feasible, but taking for granted the mechanistic bases of our civilisation I doubt if it is. Others think that the split between the serious and the commercial artist should be definite and uncompromising. Taking the premises into consideration and readily admitting that it's sad that whereas once Greensleeves was my delight nowadays gentlemen prefer blondes; and that the conditions that produced the Mozart divertimenti and the comic operas of Rossini were musically more healthy; I myself incline to this view, with the qualification that I believe that everything possible should be done to raise the level of commercial music *for what it is and within its own sphere.* This sounds like a paradox but I hope to prove that it is something more later.

Now we are always being told how fashions change, how the most modish tricks of the music-racket to-day make those of a few years back look as dowdy and ill-fed as a 1920 Paris model. Yet, examining the music on the printed page, the fundamentals of our commercial music seem to have developed scarcely at all, their conservatism is as extreme as that of the exponents of Handelian opera. The melodic material is still the invention of cosmopolitan Jews, with a dash of the negroid for spice and flavouring; and melody-makers (as the phrase charmingly puts it) remain faithful to

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the 32-bar tune, whether in 'common' or 'three-quarter' tempo, the bars divided up as follows:

4-bar phrase answered by 4-bar phrase;
repetition of above;
two 4-bar or four 2-bar phrases of ' development';
repetition of first eight bars.

(The relative proportion of 2- and 4-bar phrases depends of course on the speed.) Any innovation creates pandemonium in Tin Pan Alley while Duke Ellington's introduction of a 7-bar phrase gave rise to so deafening a clatter that it might have been as unprecedentedly important as the history books tell us was Monteverde's use of the ' unprepared ' dominant seventh. The harmonies remain those of Grieg, Chaminade and of nineteenth century salon music, with an occasional ninth or eleventh from Debussy or Delius to give point—or contour—to some particularly luscious peach of a phrase. The rhythm continues to depend on the apparently inexhaustibly surprising difference between 4, 3 plus 1, 2 plus 2, and 1 plus 3, ironed out to a clod-hopping four in a bar, two ' down ' beats, two ' up.' Every now and again someone will think of a new way of blowing into a wind instrument, called a rip or a flair or what-else, or someone will discover a new mute, yet the orchestration of the average commercial as of the hot number (which orchestration came from Paris as much as from Harlem), has been modified but little as the years have passed. Mr. Irving Berlin, uncrowned king of Tin Pan Alley—he who at the beginning of his career could play only by ear in F sharp major and who, so the story goes, when he could afford it, overcame this deficiency by the somewhat oblique method of causing to be manufactured a pianistic contraption whereby, while still ostensibly playing in F. sharp, he could by pressing little pedals modulate to any key he chose—Mr. Irving Berlin has been writing lachrymose or ragtime ditties that wing their way straight to the heart of the man in the street for over thirty years; and his technique is still as it was in the beginning, except that he has polished it up a bit.

But if the music of Tin Pan Alley has not been remarkable for technical innovation and originality of conception it has stepped out, gone places, in other and not specifically musical ways. Consider for instance the work of the legendary heroes of Tin Pan

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Alley, figures with the glamour of movie-stars, whose appeal seems to be conditioned by some quality outside their music which is not in itself noticeably distinct from that of the average hack except that it is somewhat more competent. Such a figure was the late George Gershwin, living in the Hollywooden luxury-castle of his Manhattan flat, to hear whom play on a piano, with not much more than average efficiency, sometimes pleasant, more often commonplace little tunes harmonized in four or five clichés derived from (say) Massenet which their ears had already swallowed to soporific satiety, thousands of people would sit waiting for twenty-four hours, in winter maybe in freezing cold, in summer in blistering heat. Such a figure is Mr. Cole Porter, maker of naughty but nice, cruel but comic, sophisticated but sentimental lyrics which are a flimsier counterpart of the Hemingway convention and which are, compared with the average, quite witty in their deliberate dippiness, quite touching in the sincerity of their sentimentality—Mr. Cole Porter who for a period of some months made about £1,000 a day out of one song. Such figures are the great improvising virtuosi, like Louis Armstrong, whose epoch-making improvisations turn out, on paper, to be mainly variations of the common chord. Such a figure is Mr. Benny Goodman, clarinetist, and his band, whom even straight musicians were inclined to take rather seriously until the day when, backed by the Budapest Quartet, Mr. Goodman played Mozart, and Mozart lost. Such a figure is, of course, Duke Ellington whose music, as he Stepped Out, swept (tornado-like) over two continents, and who was, largely on the evidence of a few mildly commendatory remarks of Mr. Constant Lambert, acclaimed as the First Composer of the Twentieth Century but who has now, I believe, been superseded by a gentleman called Count Basie. I do not wish to be hoity toity about these accomplished entertainers. Both Gershwin and Mr. Porter, though I don't think they had any specifically musical talent, could knock together a tune or a lyric that reflected the least synthetic elements of the ephemera of public taste, and the result was entertaining enough in its way. Messrs. Armstrong and Goodman are very clever instrumentalists so long as they don't wade out of their depth, and the Duke is a natty hand at orchestration. As for Count Basie—well, as an admirer said when I asked him to explain why Basie's band is so good, he's Got What It Takes. You see, in themselves the wares

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these men peddle aren't worth quarrelling over; it isn't the commerce itself that is dangerous but the fetish that surrounds it. Getting on for twenty years ago George Gershwin strung together a number of pretty tunes which had somehow been mislaid from his latest musical comedy, tied them up in Lisztian pink ribbon and silver paper and played them through with Paul Whiteman's orchestra in an immense stadium before thousands of people and a phalanx of arc-lights. Not long after, M. Koussevitzky was conducting more little tunes strung together not only to the delight of the customary fan-public but to the apparent satisfaction of the international committee of the I.S.C.M., while even Gershwin's musical comedies acquired a peculiar pretentiousness exemplified in a glut of operatic ' counterpoint ' that was in effect curiously old-fashioned, Edwardian, Ella Wheeler Wilcoxy. Of course the swing musicians have always despised Gershwin, yet their position is fundamentally the same—we are even told now that Ellington, who has never revealed any ability to construct beyond the limits of one side of a 10-inch gramophone record, is engaged in the production of an opera. It is very odd to me that the conception of Art with a capital A and a sepia-glossy photograph of the maestro's hands over the keyboard, should seem to have so great a commercial value in America; and it is seeping down to the lowest levels, as well as the least low, of the commercial aspects of public taste, as is revealed in the comic advertisements for ' concert ' arrangements (that is, arrangements in ' advanced piano chords, modern harmonies and rhythms ' all drawn up according to schedule) of the Classics of Broadway. O it is very funny to read how some such concoction as Alter's *Manhattan Serenade* is a ' world-renowned opus that is achieving immortality,' ' a triumph of melodic splendour, interesting and thrilling,' ' a composition that is destined to survive through the ages because of its artistic perfection,' ' a decidedly unique and daring composition in 5/4, acclaimed by musical authorities as his greatest modern work to date,' 'a definite musical necessity for your library,' and then to consider the pitiful footling incompetence these Modern Musical Classics actually are—for even as a manufactured product they are pathetically incompetent, being stuck together from harmonic snippets out of the Broadway ragbag without the most rudimentary notion as to how to construct even the crudest and most vulgar type of ' tune,' not

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to speak of the decidedly unique and the melodically splendid: it is, I say, very deliciously risible to read all this, but it is also a grim portent. The publishers of Lee Sims' *Meditation* ('a highly interesting composition by an acknowledged master') majestically announce that 'melodic and modern, this opus will be a standard for many years to come'; one fears that this time they are only too right.

All this is perhaps well enough known, but can bear repetition. Let us now, however, consider if there is any positive suggestion worth making, let us return to the question of Audience. Now 'serious' music, there's no sense in denying it, has by now become an indulgence. Perhaps it sounds brutal to look at it from the narrowly commercial point of view, but to examine the situation in the music trade is after all the point of these comments. We have grown so used to realizing that serious music isn't a commercial 'proposition'—unless there be the extraneous fan-appeal of a Toscanini conducting—that we forget the urgency of the question that therefore inevitably offers itself, namely: Is all music that isn't on the indulgence side therefore to be consigned to as speedy an oblivion as possible—it won't be very speedy since the rapidly perishing individual specimen propagates itself tenfold—as being the work of the devil? or is there some form of commercial music that might, with qualifications, be worth encouraging? Without insisting on a Marxist interpretation, it really does depend on how much faith you have in the People, the urbanized inhabitants of big cities; whether you think there's no hope of shaking them out of their inert acceptance of the saxophrantic laments of Irving Berlin and the unspeakably dreary inanities of Eric Coates and (say) Mr. Biffo's Brass Quintet, or whether you think there's a minority—an unashamedly tough, urban and (I grant you) probably leftish minority—who would like something more virile if it were offered to them. The enormous success of Marc Blitzstein's operetta *The Cradle Will Rock* makes me think there might be this potential audience, in America at least, though I've an uneasy feeling that the crowded houses and busy box-office may have been due to the unadulterated hokum of the ending, hokum which is quite out of key with the engaging qualities of the music. Of course the piece is the crudest kind of propaganda, and the music *qua* music is no 'unprecedented experience.' But it is

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really musicianly, bright, vigorous, lucid, surprisingly clean in sentiment, and in its tenderer moments has a *gentle* cynicism which is peculiarly American and peculiarly twentieth-century, and which is not such a bad substitute as most for the simplest sort of delicacy and decency of feeling. The most important of these qualities, including in itself all the others, is the fact that the score is musicianly; it is music *built* with genuine musical nerve and sinew, honestly accepting a utilitarian convention and free of all harmonic frippery; the work of a man who can do his job well *because* he is a musician, not in spite of being one. It is supremely competent, whereas the feebleness, sloppiness and mawkishness of feeling which characterises the bulk of commercial music to-day is expressed directly in the grovelling inefficiency of the technique. I am thinking mostly of course of the hack of Tin Pan Alley and the ubiquitous and cynically named 'novelty' number; but if Gershwin and Porter and Levant and the best of the swing bands attain a certain efficiency in working the tiny strip of land they've staked their claims on, it is probable that this competence is no more inherently musical than the (necessary) competence of the funambulist. Because Blitzstein's music is music built by a musician and with clearly defined purpose for a clearly defined end, one might, after listening to it, conceivably come to realize the existence of a distinction between the apparently purpose*less* music that vivifies and intensifies the human consciousness and the apparently purposeless music that stupefies and degrades it; at least this is a claim that can be made with more justice of Blitzstein than of those often-lauded stepping-tones, the Gilbert and Sullivan operas.

I believe, as Blitzstein believes, that if there is to be any improvement in the standards of commercial music it will come *via* the theatre and the cinema, because an artist who has genuine musical talent may here turn his gifts to the working out of strictly utilitarian problems, may know where he stands and what he is about. Blitzstein himself, in the articles he has written here and there during the last few years, has spoken very intelligently and with unerring theatrical instinct of the ways in which the conscientious composer may adapt himself to the exigencies of theatrical convention—of the writing of background music sincerely designed to illuminate and intensify the foreground, of the use of

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song-numbers to point ironic effects, of the importance of silence as a dramatic device, of songs employed in the development of plot, where the music is made as it were to condition the drama. He has always insisted that these problems are to be approached from the point of view of the musician's craft, that they require specialized gifts, but that he who has these gifts should be content with nothing less than the most polished workmanship. (' I have heard that a theatre-song, being " plugged," need only be " pluggable," while a concert song can . . . make its points more musically; in other words don't be too good a composer and you may write a successful theatre song. It doesn't make sense to me . . .') I do think it is very largely a bad habit that the sound-track score to the average American—let alone English—film should be as mawkish as the year's *most* mawkish film watered down to an opaque mess of flaccidity and fatuity, that even the toughest and dustiest movies about graft and gangsters, the press and prisons, should be smeared over with the irrelevant trail of second-hand Strauss-Tchaikowsky-Puccini, complete with languorous 'cellos and hysterical fiddles *in excelsis*. It is surely not too ambitious to hope that this job might be handed over to genuine utilitarian musicians such as Blitzstein and to really slick orchestrators such as Russell Bennett. This is not much to ask—it may seem to be very little; but just because it is possible and practical it is worth asking for very often and very loudly, for the more people who are brought to realize even this much, that there is no virtue in incompetence, the better for the future of music and of mankind.

You see it is all very well for the ' serious ' composer to maintain, as he usually has done, a proud isolation, but the other side of the problem, in a civilization that is certainly unlikely to become *less* mechanistic, can't be left indefinitely to look after itself. As I have said, I am not in favour of a rapprochement between art-music and commerce because on the one hand the artifying of ' low ' music has been demonstrably almost wholly bad and because on the other hand I do not believe that a man who creates music with his heart and his soul and his whole body can ever submit to the conditions of mechanism; the case of the music of the U.S.S.R. is instructive in this connection because, while ostensibly concerned with being bright, simple, ' easy to understand,' it takes over the

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conventions of the art-music of the nineteenth century, and, following through neither the implications of the popular and utilitarian nor the implications of the developed art-form, flops feebly between two stools, thus effectively demonstrating the impossibility to-day of compromise[1]. The honest composer can create music that is a full artistic expression, or he can construct music that is sincerely adapted to the conventions of industry; but he can no longer do both at the same time. Since the majority of us are seemingly obliged to live mechanised lives, it is the more important that we should create our urban (not urbane) music for entertainment as toughly and urbanly as possibly, as free from extraneous gloss and irrelevant sloshiness of feeling. In trying to do so the composer who has his wits about him will maintain an intimate contact with the theatre, where he can unequivocally 'supply' a 'demand,' and where, as Blitzstein himself has said, 'music is a powerful, an almost immorally potent weapon.'[2] For although we

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[1]In the music of the Soviet, art and commerce find their lowest common denominator in a drably uniform academicism. There is little to choose between Miaskovsky's dreary triptychs of post-Glazounov symphonies; the inverted academicism of Shoskatovitch's undigested hybrid of Tchaikowsky and Poulenc, with occasional self-conscious excursions into the machine-music of the Age of Steel; and the deliberate utilitarianism of Prokoviev's extravagantly praised *Peter the Wolf* music which, with the possible exception of Peter's own tune—and this relapses into irritating and eventually ineffective repetition—is scarcely superior to the score of the average Disney cartoon. Both in Prokoviev and in Disney the tunes and harmonies are too sentimental, the orchestration too lush, to be apposite and logical from the musical and/or utilitarian standpoint; what is needed is something analogous to the short melodic phrases in symmetrical patterns, the rhythmical ostinatos, the clear-cut polyphonic orchestration employed in his film music by Erik Satie. I have discussed this in my article on Jean Wiéner which appeared in *Scrutiny* for December, 1937.

[2]'You can say in a song what would ordinarily take pages of dialogue, and you can expand and deepen, too, by means of music . . . Music will do things you would never dream of; it can be fantastically perfect for one scene; it can louse up another

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have long ceased to hope for an idealistic or 'soul-satisfying' relation between music and the community—which is much the same as saying between music and the stage—perhaps music may yet make a comfortable wife, a faithful washer of dishes, a good cook, an efficient manageress; this much is certain, for too long now she has been an 'immorally potent' whore.

It might be objected that you can't write interesting music for the theatre until there is a live theatre to write for; and that if there were a live theatre we would be back at the social situation in which music for entertainment would be also satisfying in itself —as is that of Chabrier and the best of Offenbach—as a form of minor art. But I think this objection is specious since I am using the word 'theatre' as a generic term to describe all the types of contemporary entertainment, particularly the film and the radio show, in which more or less mechanized music is involved, and it can hardly be denied that here are new problems which demand fresh methods of treatment; for it is not *necessary*, even today, for theatre-music to incapacitate people from genuine response to the music of art and the concert-hall. I know there is *at present* no theatre-industry in this country comparable with the American film industry or the music-racket of the bouncy boys of Broadway—no theatre, that is, in which the Blitzsteins and Russell Bennetts could feel at home—but this is not, I believe, a consideration of much importance. Music was a cosmopolitan hussy in the days when she lost her reputation in (as most people think) America's Tin Pan Alley; if ever she recovers her respectability there it will—what with cinema, radio, television and the other paraphernalia of progress—be only a matter of time before this comparative

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scene to an extent which is unbelievable. There is only one rule I know; follow your theatre instinct. You discover you've got it in very much the same way as you first discovered you were a composer. You may be wrong on both counts; but your inner conviction is all you've got.' This is well said; and I would add that in Blitzstein's case the 'theatrical' or utilitarian talent seems to be inseparable from the 'æsthetic,' for such art-music of his as I've come across, is quite uninteresting. And when Russell Bennett forsakes commerce for Higher Things it is difficult to repel all recollection of the monstrosities of Symphonic Jazz.

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respectability is also cosmopolitanly asserted, with a fanfare (let us hope) of not too tinny trumpets.

The reform I am advocating—that commercial music should be entrusted to real musicians of specialized training, who would execute the job in hand with the greatest possible clarity and cleanliness—is mainly a negative one; and that we cannot hope for much more than a negative virtue is, I believe, implicit in the case about the relation between art and industry which I have been trying to put forward in these pages. But I think it is just worth while asking this further question—whether, assuming these conditions obtained, the 'urban spirit' might not in time, through and by means of this honest simplicity of musicianship, evolve for itself a form of popular music which might be, *strictly within* the conventions of commerce, of sufficient musical interest to be accepted as a form of minor popular art—because I think there is just one example already available which might be said anticipatorily to approximate to these conditions. I am referring to the recordings which, some years ago, Spike Hughes made with a negro orchestra of his own *Pastoral, Donegal Cradle Song,* and *Air in D flat,* really charming and personal tunes piquantly harmonised, pieces whose merits do not depend on their being, in the manner of Blitzstein's music, designed for and conditioned by the theatre or radio show but which *make use of* the swing convention in much the same way as (for instance) Grieg used the convention of the Victorian drawing-room piece, and with a comparable value. Unfortunately, the case of the Spike Hughes recordings cannot be said, on examination, to prove very much; for although these pieces are admired by professional swingsters, they are not admired because the tunes are elegant and the harmonies comparatively expressive rather than manufactured but again for the unenlightening reason that they've Got What It Takes —one enthusiast, when I suggested that musically speaking these pieces were in a *different* category from Count Basie or even the best of Ellington, was just unable to see what I meant. In other words, these compositions are not really an exception to my contention that it is difficult and maybe impossible to reconcile the music of art with that of commerce, or at most they are only the exception that proves the rule, because their commercial appeal depends entirely on their virtuoso or funambulist qualities and is

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independent of their musical ones. The minor artist in Hughes is almost as ' isolated ' as the far from minor artist in (say) Albert Roussel; commercially the records are admirable, like the work of Blitzstein, not because they are artistic but because they are competent. And perhaps here is a lesson, in that it seems probable that it would have been better for Hughes if he had been content with competence, for in squashing the artist in him that was lonely in the world of commerce he seems to have squashed his competence too. He now inhabits the most disreputable haunts of Tin Pan Alley and is neither a composer nor a craftsman. There may be no place for the commerce that might be minor art as opposed to the commerce that pretends to be major art; but if this is so and continues to be so it is the more necessary to keep the materials spick and span, to look to the cleanliness of the tools.

The greatest obstacle to reform is the fact that commercial music is seldom listened to but merely creeps (insidious worm) unawares into the soul. Perhaps the only admirable feature of the swing-music ramp is that it does expect its devotees to listen to its effusions and that it does enforce rigorous standards of criticism, even though these standards are misguided ones. For the rest, no-one will bother to criticize what everyone accepts but hardly notices, and in this respect the music-trade is worse off than the film industry since even film-critics tell film-fans that some movies are, by their standards, better than others. If anything is to be done it is therefore obvious that the musicians themselves must take the initiative, and there are signs, in America, with the formation of various guilds and unions, that the musicians will not finally resign their profession to the incompetence of Big Business without a fight.[3] This is all to the good; but whether or no trained

[3]I have spoken of Blitzstein and Russell Bennett because they are most representative but it would be false to suggest that they are the only American composers interested in the problem. Apart from such amiable figures as Virgil Thomson I am inclined to think that the real talent of one of America's most boosted ' serious ' composers has, or should have, a distinctly commercial bias. Those who were present at the I.S.C.M. concert in London in 1938, at which Aaron Copland's *El Salon Mexico* was performed, will remember that the audience reacted to it in a manner reminiscent of the reaction of a

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musicians gain a footing in Tin Pan Alley and are able by indirect means to clean up a little some of the lower aspects of public taste, let us not be too hard on Tin Pan Alley's original unmusicianly denizens. They were symptom rather than cause, the weakly offspring of the real perverters of taste who flourished in circles superficially less degenerate, for although music lost her *good name* in Tin Pan Alley she had lost her virtue long before in the days when the Charpentiers, the Mascagnis, the Wolf-Ferraris, purveying the harmonic ' thrill ' in the cult of the verismo, cashed in on Richard Strauss, who had cashed in on Wagner. I would be prepared to maintain that it was with these that music touched the most abysmal depths of her dishonour, for the business-men of Tin Pan Alley are for the most part simple-minded creatures whereas the Charpentiers added to emotional and intellectual rottenness the deeper immorality of being double-faced. I am reminded of a letter which Claude Debussy wrote to a friend *a propos* of *Louise*—I quote Mr. Edward Lockspeiser's translation :—

> ' . . . I have been to the show of the Charpentier family, so that I am in just the right mind to appreciate the forcefulness of your letter. It seems to me that this work had to be. It supplies only too well the need for that cheap beauty and idiotic art that has such an appeal. You see what this Charpentier has done. He has taken the cries of Paris which are so delight-

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university audience at a highbrow film-show to the appearance of Mickey Mouse. Of course the critics properly stigmatized both the music's blatant vulgarity and the audience's tell-tale responsiveness; but I couldn't help thinking that although *El Salon* might be beneath contempt as a self-subsistent work of art representative of the most ' advanced trends ' of contemporary composition, yet nonetheless if it had appeared *in a suitable context* in a Broadway show or in one of the smarter Hollywood ' musicals ' it would have been immeasurably more efficient and effective than any of the comparable productions of Gershwin, and not unhealthily entertaining; whereas it is difficult to believe that most of the music performed at these annual contortionist manifestations of clique-puffery could be healthy or entertaining or effective in any way or in any context whatsoever.

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> fully human and picturesque and, like a rotten Prix de Rome, he has turned them into sickly cantilenas with harmonies underneath that, to be polite, we will call parasitic. The sly dog! It's a thousand times more conventional than *Les Huguenots*, of which the technique, although it may not appear so, is the same. And they call this Life! Good God, I'd sooner die straight away. What you have here is something of the feeling after the twentieth half-pint, and the sloppiness of the chap who comes back at four in the morning, falling all over the baker and rag-and-bone man. And this man imagines that he can express the soul of the poor!!! It's so silly that it's pitiful . . . But then people don't very much like things that are beautiful—they are so far from their nasty little minds. With many more works like *Louise* any attempt to drag them out of the mud will completely fail.'

This painfully prophetic document was written on February 5th, 1900, and we know now that *Louise* did indeed ' have to be ' and we may well wonder whether the ' reform ' we speak of may not be a futile will-o'-the-wisp. Yet I think there is this much to be said by way of consolation, that Debussy probably exaggerates when he suggests that ' people ' are congenitally nasty-minded. I believe they are rather congenitally lazy and apathetic, and this, though it is a very difficult problem to tackle, is not by its very nature insuperable. At least Blitzstein and his colleagues work today with their eyes wide open, realizing the difficulty and the urgency of their task, whereas at the turn of the century Richard Strauss, Heir to Wagner and Europe's Greatest Composer, sincerely expressed the conviction that *Louise* was a step forward in the history of music and of opera. The genius is not yet extinct, as is testified by the prodigious success, no doubt partly conditioned by circuitous associations with revelry in the dance-palace and democratic behaviour on the part of the Royal Family, of the stuffily inept productions of Jaromir Weinberger: and I myself, writing forty years after the statement of Claude Debussy's letter, would be inclined to say that to listen to *Louise* is musically and morally more degrading than to listen to all the operettas of Mr. George Gershwin, and even the better part of Irving Berlin, for it is better to assent to the all-mightiness of chrematistics than

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deliberately to exploit the lowest under cloak of the nobly enlightened idea. Honesty is essential if there is to be a future for the ' public ' on the one hand, the ' artist ' on the other; and I cannot do better than conclude with another quotation from the letters of Ferrucio Busoni, a very great artist who suffered more acutely even than most from the necessity to adapt himself, as a performer, to a ' second-best use ' :—

> ' It is a great error to suppose that because I am a good (and also effective) artist, I should—or could—be brought into contact with the Public (in general). Artists have as much to do with the public as religion with the church. I mean, religion *belongs* to something inside, something personal (like talent) . . . In the middle of writing sentences like these, I received a telegram from Hanson: "Congratulations on the great success in Los Angeles, means very much for the future." My God! Am I then some-one who seeks a future in California? But perhaps he means California's future. (I wish it every possible prosperity)'.

W. H. MELLERS.

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REVALUATIONS (XII):

THE POETRY OF COLERIDGE

OF the bulky volume of poetry which Coleridge has left behind there are only several poems which are of sufficient merit to attract our attention still ; but there is little poetry which one approaches critically with more hesitation than these. There is an understandable temptation to accept them at their popular value without making an effort to pass judgment on that evaluation. It is a matter neither for wonder nor censure that this should be so. The intimate familiarity that may be taken to exist between the ordinary reader of poetry and *The Ancient Mariner* or *Kubla Khan* is an added difficulty towards a critical consideration that would not, in any case, be easy. In *The Ancient Mariner* this difficulty exists in a suggestion of moral purpose—a suggestion so elusive that it is of no value, yet sufficiently present to implore our assent to pretensions that a more detailed examination must reject. There is, in short, an ambiguity of motive, of creative purpose in the poem which, even unconsciously, induces uncertitude in the mind of the reader and leads him to attribute unmerited magnitude to the poem. It is doubtful if Coleridge himself was aware, when he composed *The Ancient Mariner*, of movements sprung from any loftier creative impulse than that to which he later referred in the *Biographia Literaria*. Speaking of those poems dealing with the supernatural which he undertook for the *Lyrical Ballads* he there wrote, '. . . the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them to be real.' Such a motive, in the last analysis, was not substantially different from Mrs. Radcliffe's or Monk Lewis's.

One need not cavil at applying the term moralist to Coleridge. He was concerned with philosophy and religion and politics in a way that the merely frivolous can never be concerned with them, and particularly in establishing a vital relationship between them and the world. It would be remarkable if behind the explicit motive

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of *The Ancient Mariner* it were not possible to catch glimpses of an ulterior and possibly more real impulse at work. Coleridge's poetry may be rated on too high a level, but to assume that he approached it as a pedestrian task not essentially different from ledger work would be to do him an injustice. For good or ill Coleridge could not help drawing in some measure from his full sensibility. The raconteur of supernatural tales is, in *The Ancient Mariner*, not quite free from the moralist. The moral element is forgotten, if indeed it was ever recognized as present ; it is changed, choked out by theatrical fripperies. All else is put aside in the fuller attention that is given to the merely dramatic motive. But although the moral motive is scotched, ineffectual fragments are still to be seen in odd corners of the poem as indications of that ambiguity that in the beginning was not absent from Coleridge's mind, and which still tends to make one slightly puzzled in reading *The Ancient Mariner*.

I have suggested that this ambiguity is, then, a dispute between the dramatic and the moral motives in composition, and that from the beginning Coleridge exerted his full force on behalf of the first ; that he succeeded in what he wished, but was only not sufficiently neat in disposing of the remains of the latter. The ineffective moral motive of *The Ancient Mariner* is a Christian one. It stresses the necessity of supernatural love as the order in creation. It is degraded and like an appendage when at last it comes to a head in the last stanza but two of the poem:

> He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small ;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.

But disguised and unsatisfactory as its expression is, it is still the central idea of the whole poem, the core around which the action is developed, and without which the sequence of events would be meaningless. In tracing the play of this stunted moral motive, so much thrust into the background, against the length of the poem, a certain roughness of handling is necessitated. But if the interpretation seems arbitrary it is not meant to mark the boundaries of the motive with any precision, but only to point to its existence in the poem.

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The transgression of the Ancient Mariner in killing the Albatross is a violation of that supernatural charity which should rule throughout creation. The sanctions which are imposed for the death of the Albatross do not seem remarkable when one reflects that the extraordinariness of the bird does not exist in its own right. It is necessary to bear in mind the stanza:

> At length did cross an Albatross,
> Thorough the fog it came ;
> As if it had been a Christian soul,
> We hailed it in God's name.

In these lines the Albatross becomes, in effect, a person. It is given a kind of inviolability. It has been deliberately placed by the Ancient Mariner on the same plane of creation which he himself occupies, and the full play of the will to which this deliberation gives scope brings to the Ancient Mariner's act of violence a special guilt.

The punishment which the Ancient Mariner undergoes begins to abate when he is able to generate stirrings of love in the soul once again for created things. One can place this moral motive of the poem locally very well in the last two stanzas of Part IV. Speaking of the water snakes the Ancient Mariner says:

> O happy living things! no tongue
> Their beauty might declare:
> A spring of love gushed from my heart
> And I blessed them unaware:
> Sure my kind Saint took pity on me
> And I blessed them unaware.
>
> The self-same moment I could pray ;
> And from my neck so free
> The Albatross fell off, and sank
> Like lead into the sea.

The moral motive is almost explicit at this point. It is at the beginning of Part V that this moral becomes operative in the positive sense. Up to this point the Ancient Mariner has been the active agent, but his will has not worked in harmony with the divine goodness which now, through the operation of a supernatural

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mechanism, begins the work of regeneration in his soul. There follows quickly that passage in which the seraph band enters the bodies of the crew. It is one of the most dramatic passages in the poem. Bearing with it reminiscences of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, it is but a further insistence on the controlling principle of love which springs from God.

This interpretation, though it is obvious enough, is not the one most immediate and apparent. Indeed, it lies far back in the poem. We are likely to overlook it entirely, despite the kind of obviousness which it can claim, and it would make little difference but for the moral overtone which it strikes, and which reaches our ears like a faint echo suggesting a more considerable substance than search is likely to verify. The reader more probably assumes, for example, that the Albatross is a bird of sinister significance whose death liberates inexplicable threads of mystery to wave in the atmosphere. The sequence of action is, as a result, microscoped to a moral inconsequentiality from this point onwards. It was what Coleridge wanted. He even assists the reader to this interpretation by his marginal note referring to the bird of good omen. As the poem stands it is indeed the interpretation that should be made ; but the moral motive which was sketched in above, ignored and distorted, hovers in the background and implies a moral integrity which does not exist.

The dramatic purpose of the poem is realized by means of the supernatural mechanism. But as this mechanism is a means to the dramatic fulfilment of the poem, it works also towards the failure of the moral motive. Still, the function which the machinery performs it performs well, and it is one which necessitated a mechanism of this order. The peculiar quality of the supernatural machinery consists in its being localized ; one might almost say, *essentially* localized. If the supernatural is to be treated at all it is inevitable that it should be given extension, and to do this is to tie it down to a particular place. Yet it is not impossible that these necessary materializations should appeal to the reader only as inevitable symbols of states of being that cannot otherwise be expressed. Dante achieved this. But Coleridge places his supernatural beings against the geography of an unknown world in such a manner that their respective mysteries enforce each other. This means that while the mystery of the world is increased, that of

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the supernatural not only decreases but changes in character. There is little that more readily appeals to the imagination than the mysteries of unexplored realms. To-day when the mystery has been largely swept off the earth those who still feel the appetite have to be satisfied with the somewhat prepared mystery of Sir James Jeans and the scientific popularizers of the last unexplored frontiers. But it isn't quite the same. The achievement of Coleridge is that he succeeds in recreating an atmosphere of mystery that a long line of explorers from Vasco da Gama to Byrd have been at some effort to take from us.

This air of mystery is created by direct statement and by playing the supernatural against a terrestrial background. It is stated directly, for example, in lines such as,

> We were the first that ever burst
> Into that silent sea.

Coleridge's process of building up this air of mystery, inasmuch as it concerns itself with descriptions of ' ice as green as emerald,' the relative position of the sun, the rather weird effect of personifying and capitalizing ' the STORM-BLAST,' the suitably dramatic choice of the South Pole and then the Line as the course of the ship's voyage, and particularly the skeleton ship with its crew, Death and Life-in-Death, is sometimes theatrical, but it is innocent always. It is indeed this innocence that keeps the whole machinery at times from creaking. By innocence here I mean that accomplished lack of sophistication which is sometimes so characteristic of Coleridge. By felicitous touches Coleridge tapped forgotten emotional connotations. He is able to suggest fabulous mediæval sea monsters with some subtlety:

> Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
> Upon the slimy sea.

But this direct statement of the geographical mystery is intensified by the familiar movements of the dæmons of the middle air through their element, by the skeleton ship which, with its plunging and tacking and veering gives the impression of being a constant inhabitant of the Pacific, by the Polar Spirit—in short, by that sense of supernatural population which seems to be a part of the background against which it moves. The atmosphere of *The Ancient*

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Mariner is heavily charged. The earth is a mysterious place, but its mystery is not, strictly speaking, the mystery of rocks and stones and trees. It is in good part the mystery of the spiritual beings who reside in them and whose identities are, for the poem's purposes, not clearly distinct.

To have succeeded in recreating this air of mystery, or more correctly, in creating this new air of mystery, is not after all a major achievement. It is comparatively trivial. Yet if we search for a more substantial value in *The Ancient Mariner* the search will not be fruitful. The moral value of the poem is sacrificed to the attainment of a somewhat frivolous distinction. The texture of the poetry itself is never inadequate to its purpose, but it is not, for the most part, interesting. It is inflexible because it is manufactured to compass a certain preconceived effect, and one that, from Coleridge's own words which were quoted above, is scarcely closed to suspicion. It is not likely that words of such impersonal calculation should have led on to poetic attempts whose roots were buried deep in the essential impulses of the man. The chief objection must be, I think, that *The Ancient Mariner* brings into play a machinery that is by its nature moral, but caricatures and deflects that machinery from its true purpose, that a smaller satisfaction may be realized. It is trivial, but it is not honestly so. Its pretentiousness is of a type that for a small effect debases a universe, and this is a charge of some gravity. It has lost its moral bearing and stands at the summit of a declivity at whose foot is *The Blessed Damozel*.

Kubla Khan is a poem of less worth than *The Ancient Mariner*, but the praise which it has received has been comparatively more excessive. There is in addition to the exaggeratedly laudatory attention which *Kubla Khan* has received a tendency, on the other hand, to consider it as a kind of psychological backwash from *The Ancient Mariner*. Whatever truth might possibly be in this attitude, the poem certainly has a quality peculiarly its own. Nevertheless Coleridge's judgment on it, that it was primarily a psychological curiosity, is not without its justness. Although it is only a fragment it is difficult to imagine that its completion would have brought to that portion which has been given us any new character or quality in which it may now seem to be lacking, and there is, in fact, some reason to rejoice for its not having been completed.

It is easy to believe the correctness of Coleridge's account

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of its inception. The imagery, if indeed some such term as visuality is not more appropriate, is of the fluid, indistinct type that naturally evokes a landscape seen in a dream. According to Coleridge the lines in *Purchas's Pilgrimage* on which his eyes were resting when he fell into his sleep, and which may be considered as the seed from which the poem as a whole sprang, were these: 'Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were enclosed with a wall.' The first verse of the poem, which comprises the first eleven lines, contains Coleridge's poetic creation of these two sentences, and beyond a natural enlargement nothing else. As poetry the first verse is much the best of the three. The rhythm is more searching, the lines more sensitive to the experience which they express. There is a vividness which begins to fade as the picture is expanded in the thirty-five lines of the second verse. Matter that seems foreign to the original inspiration is brought in. Thus we get a rather stock Coleridgean image in these lines:

> A savage place! as holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
> By woman wailing for her demon lover!

The natural Coleridge, the one of *Christabel,* has not been quite able to subdue some rather worn feelings of his to the particular impulse of the new poem. Shortly after these lines follows this one:

> As if the earth in fast thick pants were breathing.

Yes; one now feels justified in assuming that the white intensity of inspiration under which Coleridge is supposed to have written *Kubla Khan* before the person from Porlock turned up is beginning to wane at line eighteen. Most of the remaining lines of this verse are echoes of the first eleven. The third verse, except for several lines, has no real connection with the first two verses at all, and it is easily the worst of the three. The alliteration of the first line of the verse,

> A damsel with a dulcimer,

is almost vulgar with its blatant, unmeaning emphasis, and the verse fails to achieve any greater distinction than what one would expect from the tone which has been set by that line.

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One may examine this decline in poetic intensity in *Kubla Khan* by directing one's attention in particular to the rhythms in the three verses. In the first it is adequate to the vision it is trying to convey. In the second verse, as Coleridge becomes more expansive and verbose, the rhythm carries on in a fatigued, halting fashion, insensitive to variations of feeling and tone. In the third verse the rhythm is metallic and sing-song. From this one is led to lament with decreased regret the intrusion of that much-maligned person from Porlock. It is possible that he really did Coleridge some service; because while the charm of the first verse of *Kubla Khan* is sufficient to dull one's senses to the fact that the two following verses are singularly devoid of anything like a comparable quality, it is doubtful if those first eleven lines could have extended their empire over poetic wastes of much vaster extent. If one is inclined, he may join in the general chorus of lament that Coleridge's masterpiece was not finished. The impulse may be generous, but it is unwise to tempt charity.

In speaking of the first verse of *Kubla Khan* I have suggested that the word image is perhaps too concrete to describe accurately the pictorial effect of these lines, and that some less definitive word such as visuality would be preferable. But it is necessary to look at the lines themselves:

> In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately pleasure-dome decree:
> Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
> Through caverns measureless to man
> Down to a sunless sea.
> So twice five miles of fertile ground
> With walls and towers were girdled round:
> And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
> Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
> And here were forests ancient as the hills,
> Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

If one, being ignorant of the poem, yet with some familiarity of literature, were to read the lines for the first time he might possibly place it correctly. But there is a faint Miltonic cadence, and it would be understandable were he to place it earlier. Certainly, there is no stereotyped Romanticism about these lines. There are none of the

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stock expressions one might fear, and, in fact, it is even difficult to point to places where the imagery comes to a concentrated head. The distinctive quality of the verse is that it is without key-words. There is rather a thin, shining wash of imagery, and the nouns and adjectives are rich but indefinite in meaning. It is a verse with much connotation but no denotation. Consider in particular the last six lines of the verse. Even the number ten is diffused; it becomes twice five. The adjectives are all general: 'fertile,' 'bright,' 'sinuous,' 'incense-bearing,' 'ancient,' 'sunny.' By considering this list of adjectives it becomes apparent that there is a kind of emotional common denominator between that can only be fully defined by considering the combined meanings of all the adjectives together. This is to say more than might at first seem apparent, and it is to say a substantial thing in praise of the verse. It is to say that the creative impulse is fully expressed with perfect economy and fine precision. It is the first adjective, fertile, that is perhaps most suggestive, and the last line is the appropriate conclusion with its emphasis on greenery.

But this picture of brightness and sun is played off against the more solemn tone of mystery in the first five lines. The sonorous roll of proper names in the first line establishes this tone, and it is important to bear in mind that it is a *tone* and not a concrete picture or the logical play of an idea that gives the verse any intrinsic merit to which it may lay claim. The verse as a whole is visual, but it is a suggestion of visuality rather than a representation of the vision itself. It is genuine poetry after its kind, but its kind is not the highest. It is poetry of the incantatory variety, and it is likely to induce a drugged assent in the reader. It is because the assent which the reader gives to *Kubla Khan* is almost invariably of this kind that the influence of these first lines can make itself felt at such a distance as the third verse. The mind is too much lulled by the incantation to be minutely aware of the gradual decline in poetic power. To say, then, that the first verse of *Kubla Khan* is genuine poetry and that it successfully records an experience that has been felt, and now is realized in the verse, is not to say that the poetic roots are deep, or even in healthy soil.

There is a prevalent quality in Coleridge's poetry which would seem to take its character from that attraction which he felt towards childhood and infancy. The attraction becomes explicit in some of

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his least happy poems, but indirectly it affects most of his poetry by a personal fairy vision, and a loosening of that close integration which should exist between the emotions and the intellect. Innocence is one of the positives most frequently invoked. In *The Ancient Mariner* there was a studied and direct simplicity of statement which endowed the supernatural machinery with an effective honesty. In referring to that quality earlier in the paper I applied the term innocent to it, and I would not like to confuse that use of the term with the strained and unsatisfactory ingenuousness to which I refer now. It is this attempt to remove the feelings and thoughts of maturity from their natural context of properly proportioned sophistication, to feel the mature emotions with the simplicity of a child, that leads Coleridge, except in several poems, to feel nothing with precision, and seldom to penetrate beyond the commonplace in experience. His poem called *Dejection*: *An Ode* is Coleridge's most complete triumph over that emotional flaccidity which his more habitual modes of feeling had engendered. But before considering it, in order to appreciate the triumph more fully, it would perhaps be prudent to examine briefly a typical specimen in Coleridge's more ordinary style. The following passage is from a poem called *The Keepsake*. It has been selected almost at random, and contains the usual Coleridgean elements:

> In the cool morning twilight, early waked
> By her full bosom's joyous restlessness,
> Softly she rose, and lightly stole along,
> Down the slope coppice to the woodbine bower,
> Whose rich flowers, swinging in the morning breeze,
> Over their dim fast-moving shadows hung,
> Making a quiet image of disquiet
> In the smooth, scarcely moving river-pool.
> There, in that bower where first she owned her love,
> And let me kiss my own warm tear of joy
> From off her glowing cheek she sate and stretched
> The silk upon the frame, and worked her name
> Between the Moss-Rose and Forget-me-not—
> Her own dear name, with her own auburn hair!

This passage, especially the first sentence, is better than much of Coleridge, so there is no danger of doing him an injustice. A

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detailed analysis would be superfluous. One may point, however, to the enchanted atmosphere that is being built up in the first sentence by means of ' the cool morning twilight ' and ' the woodbine bower ' and such hushed adjectives as 'dim ' and ' quiet.' There is a decadent note in the use of the adjective ' rich ' to describe flowers, and a suggestion of liturgicism in the phrase ' swinging in the morning breeze ' that calls censers to mind and points ahead to the religiose-esthetic tradition. It is the fairy vision at work. Such an artificial vision could not but circumscribe the emotions which are worked out against its background. In the second sentence how restricted and falsified the human emotion necessarily becomes is so apparent that it is difficult not to blush for Coleridge. The tear drop is so far from being unusual with Coleridge that one might almost call it inevitable. A few lines beyond the passage which I have quoted above, he returns to the theme with renewed vigour,

> Her voice (that even in her mirthful mood
> Has made me wish to steal away and weep).

The climax of such emotion will always tend to be the bathetic sentimentality that Coleridge arrives at in the last three lines of the quotation. I have devoted this much space to a consideration of *The Keepsake,* not, indeed, believing it to merit prolonged attention —what has been said has been obvious—but to recall to mind the general level of Coleridge's poetry that the nature of his success in the *Dejection Ode* may become more clear.

The imagery of the *Dejection Ode* is taken from Coleridge's familiar flow of experience. In this connection one cannot help recalling I. A. Richard's remark: ' When a writer has found a theme or image which fixes a point of relative stability in the drift of experience, it is not to be expected that he will avoid it. Such themes are a means of orientation.' The situation in the opening of the poem is one which is common to Coleridge's experience. He is considering the night, the moon, the unsettled weather with a contemplative eye. How often these same considerations had led to feelings of indulgence and to emotional perceptions of an uninteresting and indiscriminate kind a cursory survey of the poetry is sufficient to establish. But something new occurs in this poem. The emotional perceptions are refined. Coleridge ceases to

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be the passive crucible of pleasure-giving thoughts and reminiscences. A new energy is generated in which the emotions are controlled by the intellect, and both are fused into a poetic whole. It is the creative impulse itself that has been metamorphosed, and which has led to these good results. Coleridge has acquired a mature self-consciousness that, under the circumstances of the poem, ineluctably leads to an exercise of the critical faculty.

The creative impulse, I suggested, was metamorphosed. It became, not the acceptance of feelings that brought pleasure and delight in their train, feelings of etherialized sensuousness, but regret that indulgence in those feelings was no longer possible. There is some analogy between the *Dejection Ode* and Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*. This feeling of regret which is generated for the first time is a more natural and valid experience than the lush and suspicious emotion from whose loss the newer emotion claims its existence. It is an emotion that, while it may not set the nerves aquiver or the soul afire, springs from the deeper wells of feeling, and is accompanied by a free and searching play of the intellect. Coleridge resorts to his familiar images, the moon and stars, but they are no longer stimulations to excess, for now he must say:

> I see them all so excellently fair,
> I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

The material of his poetry is forced to submit itself to the discipline of his faculties, and those faculties have been chastened by what he believes to be sterility—a sterility brought on by prolonged excursions into regions of speculative reasoning.

The development of the poem is masterly. In the first verse the old situation is set—that meeting of physical and spiritual realities that in the past had set off so often facile emotions and created a poem. But in the signs of the coming storm there is a dull ominousness that corresponds to Coleridge's emotional state.

> Well! If the Bard was weather-wise who made
> The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
> This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
> Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
> Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,
> Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes

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Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute,
Which better far were mute.
For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming on of rain and squally blast.
And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
These sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

From the effective colloquialism of the first line, there is a slow retarded movement that suggests the torpor with which Coleridge struggles. The two parenthetical lines that glibly repeat the matter of the two preceding lines are effective because they emphasize the air of general, almost irresponsible listlessness. But at line fifteen there comes a sharper desire to experience emotions again with the old intensity. The desire becomes coupled with the approaching violence of the storm. There is, for a moment, a note of decisiveness;

And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!

The refreshing effect of ' the slant night-shower ' carries a suggestion of hope, but the verse subsides almost at once to the same nerveless movement. The last line contains the first direct statement of the difficulty.

The second verse contains a further description of this ' dull pain,' and in this condition Coleridge helplessly surveys the landscape filled with those beauties to which in the past he had responded in a different key. He surveys them, noting the minute variations from which he had been so long accustomed to draw pleasure,

All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green.

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This exact particularity of observation, when followed by the next line of self-confessed emptiness,

> And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye,

generates an emotion of its own. It is that consciousness of loss that follows on an intellectual recognition that a thing which one's capacities are incapable of embracing, is yet good and to be desired. In Coleridge's case it is intensified by the memory of experience, and it is the tension set up between the memory and the recognition of present incapacity from which the poetry of the *Dejection Ode* springs. Such poetry is necessarily dependent on the intellect which measures the past with the present and recognizes the discrepancy. Because the tragic stirrings of feelings are subdued, the baroque gesture unnatural, the emotion is far from being less real. It is informed by a consciousness that is in the last analysis, intellectual, and which controls the quality of the emotion itself.

The third verse is short. After the expanded description of the difficulty with which the second verse occupied itself, Coleridge confesses his inability to throw off this general debility of feeling, and begins to examine the cause more carefully in the last two lines:

> I may not hope from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

The intellect now assumes a more explicit rôle in the fourth verse, and from the analysis of his own state of being Coleridge begins to evolve a kind of philosophy. The verse leaps forward with a new vitality—the vitality of the intellectual explorer. From apparent loss Coleridge has not only created poetry of a high order, but he begins to draw out a kind of wisdom as well. The fourth, fifth and sixth verses are concerned with the exposition of this wisdom. The movement is impersonally alive, and Coleridge speaks with a larger voice than he has ever known before. I have already suggested the analogy that might be drawn between this poem and Wordworth's *Immortality Ode*. The similarity is difficult to localize, but it is strikingly present. One might, for example, compare the sixth verse of Coleridge's *Dejection Ode* with the first, and in less degree, the sixth verses of the *Immortality Ode*. I abstain from doing so here for it is difficult to see what purpose it could possibly

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serve in understanding Coleridge's poetry, however interesting it might be as an exercise. In fairness to Coleridge it should be mentioned that his *Dejection Ode* was composed first.

The seventh verse is not as good as the others, and the poem would be better if it were omitted. The poem which began with an examination of self, by the eighth and final verse has been reorientated, and the wisdom which Coleridge has unfolded is deflected from a purely personal application by these concluding lines to the friend to whom the poem in its entirety is addressed.

I have tried not to enlarge upon this poem to the point of tediousness, yet it is, I think, the most important poem that Coleridge has left behind. I have tried to explain why it is his most mature and accomplished production. *The Ancient Mariner* has usurped too large a portion of renown. English literature would be poorer if it had not been written, but its excellence is of that type which, to gain a world is willing to sell its soul. *Kubla Khan* may be dismissed with a friendly nod to the first eleven lines. What else remains? *Christabel* is less excellent than *The Ancient Mariner. Lewti* is a pleasant poem. It perhaps deserves more than *Kubla Khan,* but the most generous criticism could not conscientiously say that it was more than a pleasing trifle. *Frost at Midnight* begins to move in the direction of the *Dejection Ode,* but in comparison with it *Frost at Midnight* is not a success. One may in addition sometimes find little poems like *Work Without Hope* whose first four lines are unexpectedly pleasant:

> All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair—
> The bees are stirring—birds are on the wing—
> And Winter slumbering in the open air,
> Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!

But one should not expect more from Coleridge. At the same time we should be grateful for his best poem, and even for *The Ancient Mariner,* and avoid patronizing. It is the exaggerated praise that has been given him, through no fault of his, which invites censure.

EUGENE MARIUS BEWLEY.

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CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editors of *Scrutiny*.

Dear Sirs,

From your last number it seems that the word ' liberal ' is in danger of discerption. Two parties drag at it simultaneously and in opposite directions; unless you, Sirs, take preventive measures it hardly seems likely that the word will survive.

Mr. Harding, I see, spells it both with a capital and with a small ' l.' I suggest he confines himself to one of these, preferably the capital. Then he will have a word of his own which he can drag off where he will.

For I don't know that the proprietors of this spelling are sufficiently perspicacious, or if perspicacious sufficiently alert to exercise control over him. They are the descendants of those who, about the second quarter of last century, arrogated to themselves and to their notions, their arts, that title which had hitherto been accorded to all arts and notions not servile. Henceforward only the Liberals were to be liberal, the rest of the world mechanics. Thereby they proved, as it had not been proved before, how *illiberal* human nature might be.

And also, perhaps, how humourless. The words ' Liberales ' and ' Libéraux ' were first imported from France and Spain to suggest that, however improbable to a sober islander, there were elsewhere groups of people claiming a monopoly in wisdom. ' But so do we,' put in the English Liberals, Anglicizing the opprobrious term.

That they could do so is to be explained only by a double ignorance, not always involuntary. First there was the ignorance which any claim to encyclopædism implies; and secondly that, of a different kind, which rendered such a claim possible. It might also be called innocence or lack of experience. By unfortunate chance or diabolic prevision the Liberals had escaped, and by sluggishness of imagination were unable to conceive, the distresses which provoke knowledge.

From such people, I have suggested, Mr. Harding need fear no exacting supervision. But from time to time, I must confess, the

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doubt occurs to me whether, if any were exercised, he would resent it. In his review he too hobnobs with ignorance—at least that is a possible explanation of what he does, and I can think of no other. He patronizes Mr. Eliot, he puts his trust in history according to J. M. Robertson and Joseph McCabe.

Nor do I find his positives reassuring, however vaguely described. They bear a strong resemblance to those of the Liberal tradesman of last century, who believed in material progress; and of the boy-scout, the novel-reader and the cinema-goer of to-day. Though the latter pretend 'ideal' ambitions, what they pursue are the tradesman's in a nebulous form. Of the itch for adventure and lust for novelty, which are all Mr. Harding's 'exploration' comes to, Burke long ago gave an adequate account to the Duke of Bedford: such things are, he said, 'an indulgence for those who are at their ease.' They are a function of complacency, and complacency of ignorance. The Duke of Bedford was still sufficiently in awe of tradition not to call himself a Liberal: Mr. Harding perhaps after all would not be reluctant to be condemned as one, and of a most capital sort.

Yours faithfully,

JAMES SMITH.

As a former Boy Scout (I prefer capitals here) and even now a novel-reader and cinema-goer, I naturally find Mr. Smith's elegant and scholarly letter rather baffling. Most of it seems quite remote from the simple theme of my review. However, there is at least one relevant statement which I can understand, and that is untrue. Mr. Smith says that what I called 'exploration' amounts only to the itch for adventure and the lust for novelty. It doesn't. In the space of a rejoinder to a reply to a review of three reprinted lectures I can hardly expound this assertion. It is my word against Mr. Smith's. I can only say—and leave it at that—that he hasn't a monopoly of spiritual experiences, even though the intellectual framework in which I try to arrange mine is not one that recommends itself to him.

I know that Christian apologists have an interpretation of the persecution of Galileo and similar incidents which serves to remove the discredit from the Church; and Brother George Every, in a

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personal letter, puts this case persuasively enough to bring me to an open mind about it.

If my tone towards Mr. Eliot could be regarded as patronizing I am most sorry. I believe that in spite of superior capacities of mind Mr. Eliot is more mistaken in some of his attitudes and beliefs than I am. If my review did suggest anything else I can only plead the difficulty of discussing publicly a question that provokes strong personal convictions on both sides.

This covers all of Mr. Smith's letter that seems relevant to the review. The rest only means that he disagrees with my general outlook and I should have been sorry to leave him in any doubt about that.

D. W. H.

To the Editors of *Scrutiny*.

Dear Sirs,

My attention has recently been called to two articles on Chapman by James Smith in your issues of March and June, 1935, in which a reference is made to an editor of Chapman that seems to call for a reply. On page 346 of the March number Mr. Smith quotes eight lines from *Byron's Conspiracy* (III, 1, 32-39) to which he prefixes the remark: 'the innocent archaism of "let" in the sense of " hinder " has tripped up an editor.' As an editor, I believe the only editor, of this play I beg to submit a few words in rebuttal.

It would indeed be an ignorant editor who was unfamiliar with this 'innocent archaism'; the formula 'without let or hindrance' is a commonplace; the verbal 'let' in the sense of 'hinder' occurs in Tennyson and Morris, to say nothing of a line in *Hamlet* 'I'll make a ghost of him that lets me.' Certainly 'to let' may mean 'to hinder' but does it in this passage? Let me quote the lines in question:

> You, that have made your way through all the guards
> Of jealous state, and seen on both your sides
> The pikes' points charging heaven to let you pass.

Mr. Smith, it seems, interprets the last words as meaning 'to prevent your passing.' I believe that this is an impossible interpretation.

In the first place we may consider the phrase from the point of view of syntax. The verb 'let' meaning 'hinder,' often takes

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a preposition ' of ' or ' from ' as in the O.E.D. citations from Malory, Tennyson, and Newman. Shakespeare uses it at times simply with a noun as object, as in the phrase from *Hamlet* quoted above or in *Lucrece* (1. 328) ' who—his course doth let;' at times with an infinitive, ' nothing lets to make us happy ' (*Twelfth Night* V 1, 256) or with a dependent clause introduced by ' but,' ' what lets but one may enter,' (*Two Gentlemen* III 1, 113 and *Comedy of Errors* II 1, 105). I can find no instance in the quotations in O.E.D. or in Shakespeare of such a construction as Mr. Smith assumes in the Chapman lines. We might, perhaps, expect that Chapman, if he meant to use the verb in the sense of ' hinder,' would have written ' to let your passage,' which would be good Elizabethan English, but he did not. The use of ' let ' in the sense of ' permit ' with a following infinitive (normally without ' to ') is common in Elizabethan as in earlier and later English—see citations in O.E.D. *sub* ' let ' II, 12.

There is, I think, a stronger argument against Mr. Smith's interpretation than these syntactical considerations. It rests upon the imagery of the whole passage. Byron, who has overheard La Fin's ' feigned passion,' reproaches him and reminds him that he has made his way through all the guards of jealous state (i.e., the sentries guarding a royal presence) at which time he, La Fin, has seen ' the pikes' points charging heaven ' (i.e., ' lifted in salute,' see my note *ad loc.*) to allow him to pass through. Pikes are not lifted toward heaven, but dropped and crossed to ' let,' ' hinder,' the passage of an intruder. That the pikes in this passage are lifted is clear, I think, from the following lines, not quoted by Mr. Smith:

> Will you, in flying with a scrupulous wing,
> Above those pikes to heavenward, fall on them?

The image plainly that of a bird falling on the points of upraised pikes. Elsewhere (p. 350) Mr. Smith speaks and speaks well of Chapman's ' piercing eye and concrete imagination.' Is not this passage an admirable example of these qualities? Chapman has seen the pikes of a royal guard raised in salute to pass a royal favorite and he goes on to imagine such a favorite flying high above the points only to fall upon them like a broken-winged bird because of ' ignorant conscience ' and ' cowardice.' To mistake the archaism ' says Mr. Smith ' ruins an impressive passage.' To my

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mind the passage is completely ruined and the imagery blotted out if one interprets ' let ' as an archaism here.

Pursuing his statement that ' Chapman is not read with sufficient care' Mr. Smith goes on to quote two lines from Bussy:

> Come, Siren, sing, and dash against my rocks
> Your ruffian galley, rigged with quench for lust.

and remarks that it has not always been remembered in Italian a *ruffiano* is a pimp. That is, to be sure, an Italian meaning; does the English *ruffian* contain the same sense? I find no citations in O.E.D. of ' ruffian ' equivalent to ' bawd,' ' bully,' possibly 'pimp,' before 1618 when Morrison takes over directly the Italian sense. The word, of course, is common in Shakespeare, but never, I think, with the sense that Mr. Smith assumes it has here. Further such a sense is excluded, I believe, by the context. In this scene (*Bussy* V 1) Montsurry is using threats and violence on his wife to obtain two distinct ends, to make her write a letter giving an assignation to her lover, and also to make her name their go-between, the ' most inscrutable pander ' (line 76). Is the 'ruffian galley ' the lover, or, as Mr. Smith implies, the go-between? Plainly the former, as an earlier editor, Professor Boas, notes; in fact, Bussy the lover, has already (III 11, 62) been called a ruffian. Montsurry in the lines cited bids her ' sing'; a little later (line 75) he says: ' Sing, that is write, and *then* take from my eyes the mists that hide the pandar.' It is to the lover that the lady is forced to write, not to the pandar, whose identity is shortly after revealed to Montsurry by his appearance on the scene and his quite inexplicable death. If we were to interpret ' ruffian' as ' pimping ' we must go on to refer ' galley ' to the pandar, but such a reference is quite contrary to the whole action of the scene.

After so detailed an examination of these scenes it is perhaps hardly worth while to remark that on page 54 of the June issue Mr. Smith charges Bussy with killing three men in the famous duel. A casual glance at the scene (II, 1) in which the Nuntius reports the fight will show that Bussy kills only two, Barrisor and L'Anou; the third, Pyrrhot killed, and was killed by, Bussy's friend Melynell (II, 1, 127-130); Mr. Smith says quite truly ' Chapman is not read with sufficient care.'

THOMAS MARC PARROTT.

Princeton University.

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To the Editors of *Scrutiny*.
Dear Sirs,

It is many years since you were good enough to publish my essays on Chapman. If I were to handle the subject again, I have no doubt I should find it necessary to revise them extensively. In general I no longer think Chapman as important as I did; in particular I regret the manner in which I criticized Professor Parrott. It was ungracious; he is justified in his complaint and I offer him my apologies. In extenuation of my offence let me plead I hope I should not commit it now.

If, however, I no longer wish to defend my essays in their entirety, neither do I wish entirely to abandon them. If I did so, Professor Parrott must pardon me for saying it would not be for the sort of points he raises. None of them seems of the greatest importance, the last in especial deserving neither his ink, nor mine, nor the printers. My essays were abominably obscure, but one thing at least about them I should have thought might be clear. Between them and Professor Parrott's edition there are differences, not only of detail, but of fundamental principles.

But I will take in order the first two points he is good enough to raise. About the first it seems to me that he is probably correct; about the second certainly wrong.

I hope I did not intend the implication that he was ignorant of the archaic meaning of ' to let.' I implied, and now I see I did it wrongly, that the meaning had not occurred to him as he read. I must confess it had not occurred to me that there was a difference between ' let ' and ' let to '; or that ' raised in salute ' was even a possible interpretation of ' charging heaven ' (was it not a custom that pikes should be ' vailed'? but I do not know). In any case I was culpably blind in not seeing that the image might be what Professor Parrott says it is: that of an honoured visitor at Court passing between deferential guards. The contrast between his easy and purposeful progress and the attempted vertical progress of a bird is very much in Chapman's manner. Even if the bird's attempt were not vain, it would be foolish.

To my mind the contrast was, not between a man and a bird, but between two birds. One of these, flying horizontally, had at least hopes of attaining its goal; and Byron, as I understood him, was reminding La Fin that he had shown skill in doing so. Obstacles

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had been thrust in his way, such as ' raised pikes'; and this was my interpretation of the phrase ' charging heaven.' I still think that the participle ' charging ' is in its favour, as also the hostility of the whole line:

> The pikes' points charging heaven to let you pass.

Further, if La Fin has his way made for him it is not very happy to describe him as ' making way through . . . jealous state.' But now I agree that Chapman was capable of such inaccuracies; and Professor Parrott's argument from syntax (as far as I can see; though I know little of the matter) is decisive.

My remark about the meaning of ' ruffian ' followed upon another that, to guard against misunderstanding Chapman, one should be prepared with a mass of miscellaneous knowledge, especially etymological and antiquarian. I would now extend this to cover many or most of his contemporaries; and of the word ' ruffian ' in particular would maintain that none of them could see it or use it in the same sentence as ' siren,' ' quench ' and ' lust '—

> Come, Siren, sing, and dash against my rocks
> Your ruffian galley, rigged with quench for lust—

without evoking the associations of ' bawd ' or 'pandar.' If the O.E.D. maintains otherwise then it must be wrong; and that is not wholly unlikely. It was put together with the help of readers, many of whom—Professor Parrott must again excuse me—like him were infected with what might be called the heresy of provincialism. They believed that there was an English literature which was other than a branch or department of the literature of Europe; and which might therefore be studied by and for itself.

In my essay I said that ' ruffiano ' was Italian for pimp. That was my ignorance; it is also French, Spanish and medieval Latin. From one or other of these sources it must have been familiar to Englishmen long before 1618.

If not, how does Professor Parrott interpret the word in a passage such as the following, from *The Comedy of Errors* (2, 2, 135)? Adriana is speaking to the man she thinks her husband:

> How deerely would it touch thee to the quicke,
> Shouldst thou but heare I were licentious?

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> And that this body consecrate to thee,
> By ruffian lust should be contaminate?

She is not suggesting that he would be touched if she were violated, as she might be by a ruffian in Professor Parrott's sense; but if she were prostituted, as she could only be by a ruffian in mine. Or when the Prince and Claudio (*Much Ado*, 4, 1, 92) accuse Hero of talking ' with a ruffian at her chamber window,' does Professor Parrott think they mean one who is merely a swaggerer and not rather a bawd—or at least one who is both swaggerer and bawd together? Among the charges which Prince Hal, speaking as his father, brings against Falstaff is that of being ' Father Ruffian ' (*I Henry IV* 2, 4, 500): coming as it does between ' grey Iniquitie ' and ' Vanitie in yeeres ' ' Father Swaggerer,' or even Father Villain, is the least that it implies. Finally Cæsar in *Antony and Cleopatra* (4, 1, 4) refuses Antony's challenge with the words:

> . . . let the old ruffian know
> I have many other wayes to dye.

It is true that Antony has just been behaving in an unruly manner; but is it not possible or even likely that a second reference is intended, namely to his lechery in the East? In weighing this evidence Professor Parrott will bear in mind that the various senses of a word are not wholly unconnected: to prove that ' swaggerer ' is meant in a certain passage, is not to prove also that ' bawd ' cannot be meant. A bawd is frequently a swaggerer or a bully ; and indeed ' bully,' as Professor Parrott notes, came in time to mean ' bawd.'

On the point immediately under discussion the O.E.U. is in fact not quite so unhelpful as appeared to Professor Parrott. Had his eye glanced from the article ' ruffian ' to those which follow he would have found many quotations anticipating Morrison. As early as 1549, for example, Coverdale wrote of ' light ruffianyng and blasphemous carnal gospelling '; and again in 1556 of ' intemperance, ruffianyng, gluttonie.' Swaggering is rarely if ever spoken of as ' light,' bawdry often; and it is bawdry rather than swaggering which groups itself among the fleshly sins. To save space I give a select list:

> *anno* 1579 every manner of wanton or ruffianly leaping and frisking

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1580 ruffianlike railing and whorish scolding
1583 all manner of lewdnesse and ruffianry
1598 bawdries or ruffianlike tricks
1611 (Florio) *ruffianesco* ruffianish
(Cotgrave) ***ruffiener*** to Ruffianize, to pandarize it, make or set lecherous matches.
(Coryat) She will . . . cause thy throate to be cut by her Ruffiano.

As for the interpretation of Montsurry's lines, once the meaning of 'ruffian' has been settled, I am somewhat embarassed; I must it seems explain that they are metaphorical. Describing Bussy as a pandar, Montsurry no more accuses him of acting as go-between than, describing him as a galley, he asserts Bussy is built of timbers with a sail. Madly in love with his wife, Montsurry cannot conceive that anyone is in love with her but himself; or that, as she is not in love with him, she is in love with anybody. If she has commerce with men, then he thinks it can only be the commerce of lust. And Bussy is rigged—stored I suppose, or equipped—to quench such lust. In conveying the equipment to Tamyra, though he may think of himself as a lover, he is virtually a pandar; in receiving him, though she thinks herself a great lady she is a harlot in the stews.

The image has the force of vice and none of its grossness, purged by its classical and maritime associations. They are brought from far; but at the same time a bridge is, so to speak built to them by 'ruffian' in another meaning, not yet considered. It is that of a pandar who is not heavy and bullying, but gaily dressed and in particular long-haired: Professor Parrott will find an excellent instance of the meaning *2 Henry IV* (III, i, 22). The winds are spoken of

Who take the Ruffian Billowes by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads.

When this meaning is remembered, the galley is seen almost with the physical eye to surge past, ribbons and pennants streaming. I am glad to have been brought back to this image: it almost restores my opinion of Chapman.

Yours sincerely,

JAMES SMITH.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

'ENGLISH IN SCHOOLS.'

Mr. Denys Thompson's withdrawal, which readers will have noted with regret, from the Editorial Board of *Scrutiny*, means, they will be glad to learn, that he is now able to devote himself to *English in Schools*, a journal (see inside back cover of this number of *Scrutiny*) the admirable purpose of which is indicated by the title.

HOW TO READ A NEWSPAPER

BETWEEN THE LINES, OR HOW TO READ A NEWSPAPER, by Denys Thompson (Frederick Muller, 3/6).

Mr. Thompson here enlarges on one aspect of the subject of *Culture and Evironment*. It is, perhaps, the most important aspect of all, for even those of us who pride ourselves—with or without reason—on our immunity from the blandishments of advertisements and popular entertainment would hesitate to claim that we are entirely unaffected by our daily paper. It becomes, therefore, increasingly important to be on our guard—especially when we are inclined to agree with the paper's comments—and to try to put others on their guard; at the present time, this is even more important than usual, for war has given political propagandists of all shades full scope. In spite of the Government's declared intentions, a certain section of the Press has begun to dig up atrocity stories of the last war, invent new ones and—no doubt intentionally—help to create a mentality which will approve of atrocities if committed on the right side. In this they would seem to have the support of at least one Cabinet Minister, who is fully aware of the emotional effect of a term such as ' Huns.'

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Mr. Thompson's book is well arranged, and his examples fairly chosen and amusing—except when they are too grossly dishonest for amusement. He does not confine himself to detailed analysis or comments on tone or intention, but can show how a certain type of paper can contradict itself even in its so-called facts. (We might notice, at the time of writing, the number of Finnish victories, not mentioned in official communiqués, which are the result of wish-fulfilment on the newspaper's part.) He deals with the distortion and suppression of news, the substitutes for news and the pervading power of propaganda in its various forms. There are examples on which we can test our own discernment.

It must be admitted that the book suffers from a certain breathlessness that was a drawback to *Reading and Discrimination*. The author seems sometimes in too much of a hurry to elucidate a point, and assumes that his readers know all this already. This, of course, lays him open to the charge of preaching to the converted, and is particularly noticeable in the exercises at the end of the book. I don't think the average reader would know quite what to make of: ' How would you describe the texture of the writing in each of these passages?' or : ' What is the quality of the argument in each of these quotations?' If we could have rather more elementary and graded exercises, there is no reason why the book should not be a successful class-book for upper forms and W.E.A. classes. As it is, in the hands of the teacher it will provide plenty of admirable material for discussion at almost all stages, especially as the lines of attack are indicated so clearly, and further subject-matter lies at hand for everyone. It has the advantage, too, of starting by criticism of something which is familiar to even the very young, and the faults of which can be demonstrated so easily: a contradiction in statement is much easier to point out than the ' appeal ' of an advertisement.

The book, we are told, is designed for the general reader, but I'm afraid that people who can't ' read ' in the author's sense will scarcely be likely to tackle it; I'm sure its chief use will be in teaching of various kinds and there, with the qualifications I have made above, it should be of very great value—all the more so for its appearance in a time when even the wariest are apt to let their standards get rather damaged.

F. CHAPMAN.

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EDUCATIONAL

VILLAGE LIFE AND LABOUR, ed. by C. G. Hutchinson and F. Chapman (Cambridge University Press).

THE CONTROL OF LANGUAGE, by Alec King and Martin Ketley (Longman's, Green and Co., 3/6).

All teachers who feel truly sorry Industrial Man's dominion has broken Agricultural Man's social union, and who want to persuade their pupils to share their sorrow, will be grateful to the compilers of *Village Life and Labour*. 'For the twentieth century,' say the authors, 'the terms Culture and Agriculture connote entirely different, unrelated worlds. It is the aim of this book to suggest that this antithesis is false.' To this end they have collected passages from the writings of Cobbett, Jefferies, George Sturt, T. Hennell, Adrian Bell, A. G. Street, Walter Rose, and H. E. Bates, and classified them under three headings: Agriculture, Crafts Ancillary to Agriculture, and Other Rural Industries. They feel their selections are worth study in themselves, as specimens of 'good sound English prose,' and hope that readers will be led on to peruse the complete works of the authors represented.

What I find admirable about the book is this: that, at a time when educationalists are more than ever cashing in on enthusiastic adolescent dealism, and forming would-be world-changing groups, full of self-sacrifice, civics, and social service, it offers means whereby the child can get some sort of glimmering of what is meant by culture and civilization, and a deeper insight into the sort of values which ought to underlie the good life, than he is likely to obtain from most of the hand-books about our changing universe that are written specially for his benefit.

Messrs. Hutchinson and Chapman are not nostalgic about the past: they quote with approval Jefferies' saying that his 'sympathies and hopes are with the light of the future'; and this is another good point about their book—though I could wish it had been made even more explicit. All culture, whether individual or social, is a matter of balance. It is the virtue of writers like Jefferies and Sturt that they perceived and recorded states of social and individual equilibrium; but the danger of concentrating on their work may be a tendency to regard the past as endowed with a kind

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of static perfection. It is not irrelevant to remember that the celebrated waggon was in its present form a seventeenth century invention—not very old, as agriculture goes. And if you were a muck-spreader, or a horse, would you rather have a tumbril with a pair of Mr. Sturt's wheels on it, or a pair of pneumatic-tyred ones?

There are two things which I do not like about the book. The first is the inclusion of the bit about lace-making by H. E. Bates. Its subject matter is interesting, but beside Cobbett and Sturt it sounds like what it is, a piece of sentimental journalese. The second is the bibliography, which is inordinately long for a book of this kind, and shows no critical discrimination whatever. The beginner can only be flabbergasted by such a display of erudition ; what he wants is a guide not a catalogue ; and what sort of guide is he who counsels one to read the complete works of A. G. Street? *Farmer's Glory*, yes: but not, surely, *all* the rest.

The Control of Language is a useful book. The authors acknowledge their indebtedness, for their ' starting point and inspiration,' to the works of Mr. C. K. Ogden, and Prof. I. A. Richards. It contains chapters on scientific prose, emotive prose, and style, and is liberally illustrated by examples drawn from standard authors, from contemporaries, and from journalism. The exercises are good, and give scope for creative as well as for critical writing. It would be suitable for school certificate work, for sixth forms ; and in particular for those sixth formers who do not specialize in English, but who have, often unwillingly, to devote a few periods to a subject they are inclined to despise.

T. R. Barnes.

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SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM

DANGEROUS THOUGHTS, by Lancelot Hogben (Allen and Unwin, 8/6).

As a popular writer on science, Professor Hogben is in the tradition of T. H. Huxley. He has the merits as well as the limitations involved in that ' robust materialism ' which he praises in Huxley, and his genuine concern for directed social change must command respect. At the same time there is evidence in the book of a widening gap between scientific and humanistic studies—Huxley would hardly have referred to Berkeley as an ' official logician,' or expressed the hard-boiled indifference to the arts that Professor Hogben parades.

Out of a collection of essays that cover between them a wide range, it will be necessary to concentrate on a few points, and it seems best to ignore the frequent capricious and crude *obiter dicta*. As Professor Hogben says in the introduction to *Mathematics for the Million* of similar ' asides and soliloquies ' in that work: ' They are put in to sweeten the pill. Maybe many of them have as little nutritive value as saccharine.' I prefer to concentrate on points where the reader of *Scrutiny* is likely to welcome much of what Professor Hogben says, yet will feel compelled to part company with him on important topics, or at least raise further questions where he rests satisfied.

A point on which agreement is likely to be little qualified——just because ultimate ends are not at once obtrusive—is that discussed in the first essay, which is one of the most valuable in the book. Professor Hogben distinguishes between what he calls scientific humanism, and the type of Socialism which aims merely at a change in the *administrative* machinery of industry. Scientific humanism attaches itself rather to the ' Utopian ' Socialism of the nineteenth century, which 'in opposition to the Liberal doctrine that prosperity is being able to choose the greatest variety of goods, asserted the need to decide whether the dark satanic mills were making things which are good for men to choose.' It matters little that in the long run Professor Hogben's idea of ' what it is good for men to choose ' may seem conditioned by his ' robust materialism.' The important thing is the extent to which he is

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prepared from a very different starting-point to recognize the need for value-judgments on the quality of living of the kind that *Scrutiny* has always insisted on. And his belief in the possibilities afforded by technological advance for ' a programme of bio-esthetic planning which may prove more congenial to basic human needs than the spectacle of a sixpenny store building ' is useful for anyone who wishes to defend the sort of insistence referred to against the charge of being merely negative and nostalgic. As for the urgency of the problem—' Fascism is the reaction of outraged human nature endowed with enough intelligence to be exasperated, and too demoralized to explore an alternative constructive use for the new powers at hand.'

Equally valuable material is to be found in the seventh essay, where the contrast between the two types of Socialism appears as that between ' planning for survival ' and ' planning for purchasing power.' Urbanization is connected with declining fertility. ' The pattern of passive satisfaction and conspicuous expenditure encouraged by an increasing multiplicity of useless commodities and new distractions is only one side of the psychological problem presented by urban concentration . . . In the city reproduction is an unwarranted intrusion of hospital practice on the orderly routine of a mechanized existence.' And in the same essay the ' Utopian ' Socialists are praised because ' they were not hypnotized by the liberal delusion that things people have been educated to demand by capitalist advertisement are necessarily the things they *need* most.'

These quotations, admittedly selected with care, will serve to show in what respect a reader of *Scrutiny* is likely to welcome and applaud Professor Hogben's work, while bearing in mind that Professor Hogben's estimates of ' basic human needs ' is not likely to be exactly his. This reservation leads to a consideration of another set of problems on which agreement is likely to be much more qualified: those, namely, which centre in the notion of 'culture.' Here a reference to the review of Bernal's *Social Function of Science* in *Scrutiny* for June, 1939, will shorten discussion, for many of Mr. Lucas's criticisms of Professor Bernal would apply also to Professor Hogben.

Discussion may start from a passage in the sixth essay where two genuine senses and one bogus sense of ' culture ' are distin-

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guished. Of the genuine, ' one is the private problem of helping an individual to discover congenial sources of enjoyment to occupy leisure in later life ' and the other 'the public business of equipping individuals with the knowledge necessary for the discharge of their mutual responsibilities as co-citizens of a democratic society.' We may regretfully agree that often ' in practice what is called cultural education is neither the one nor the other ' but is the cultivation of ' good taste, which is synonymous with ostentatious refinement appropriate to a leisured class, while still feeling that what we mean by culture cannot be accounted for in terms of Professor Hogben's dichotomy, or at best that the kind of ' knowledge ' which the book as a whole shows to be referred to under the second alternative is too much a matter of information, and too little one of wisdom, sensibility, or sense of relative importance. This is no doubt vague, but the reader will be able to give it body and concreteness (especially with the help of Mr. Lucas's review referred to above).

More detailed criticisms may be suggested. Granted the desirability of an integration of naturalistic and humanistic studies, does not Professor Hogben's insistence on the *necessity* of a fairly detailed education in the social potentialities of scientific discovery overlook the fact that the work *can* be done to a fair extent precisely by books like *Dangerous Thoughts*. The notion of a class of scientific or cultural middlemen—more respectfully, the notion of a hierarchy—might have repaid closer attention. Again, we do not find any conception of *interaction* between specialist and public, of an educated public opinion helping to direct the specialist in the light of the information they get from him about the kind of things he can do. Professor Hogben assumes too easily that 'knowing how science can be used to advance civilized living ' carries with it agreement about ends (Mr. Lucas brings a similar charge against Professor Bernal).

Such comments are trite but perhaps not unnecessary. But the corrective to Professor Hogben's emphases cannot be given in generalities, and anyone who, while sympathizing with the desire for a scientific humanism, cannot believe that science will furnish its whole content, must pin his faith to the patient working out, in the concrete, of what is implied in a humanism in the line of descent from Arnold and (pace Professor Hogben) Dr. Johnson. As it is, it's possible to understand why Professor Hogben should turn

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from a vaguely evoked 'European *spirit*' to the outstanding *achievements* of civilization in modern Europe and modern America.' One might suggest that the task of a humanistic education is to integrate ' spirit ' and ' achievements ' by trying to understand their interconnections, and by constant and conscientious judgments of relative value. Even if he hardly seems to admit the existence of the problems, Professor Hogben brings them before the mind and provides material for the working out of a solution. The vigour and acuteness of much of his work should be a challenge to those who are dissatisfied with his notion of humanism to state their disagreement with equal concreteness and clarity.

J. C. MAXWELL.

THE GREAT YEATS, AND THE LATEST

LAST POEMS AND PLAYS, by W. B. Yeats (Macmillan, 6/6).

This is a saddening volume. That isn't merely because it illustrates once more that slackening of tension which is so apparent in Yeats's work of the past decade—the last. It was remarkable enough that his peak should come as late as 1928, the year of *The Tower*, and he could hardly be expected to keep up through his old age the taut, delicate and difficult complexity that *Sailing to Byzantium* (dated 1927), in that volume, represents supremely. The *Byzantium* (dated 1930) of the succeeding collection, *The Winding Stair* (1933), is also a fine poem, and it might appear at first sight to be of the same order; but, actually, comparison exposes a striking loss, and the organization is significantly less rich. And to this inferiority it seems reasonable to relate the large proportion of unsuccessful work—poems that, whatever they were for Yeats, are not poems for other readers: things in which the poet has handed over his job to Crazy Jane, and others in which allusiveness, oracular spareness, esoteric suggestion and familiar types of 'images' and symbols don't produce organization.

There is plenty of this kind of unsuccess in *Last Poems and Plays*. But what makes this volume painful reading is that in it which reminds one of a point about *Byzantium* not yet made. The inferiority of that poem relates to the absence from it of the positives between which the complex tension of *Sailing to Byzantium* is organized. There is, on the one hand, no ' sensual music '—

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The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas

—but instead:

All mere complexities,
The fury and the mire of human veins.

On the other hand, instead of the ' monuments of unaging intellect,' which are felt as a positive presence in *Sailing to Byzantium*, we find the ironic potentialities implicit in ' artifice of eternity ' developed into an intensity of bitterness and an agonized sense of frustrate impotence:

At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,
Nor storms disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
Where blood-begotten spirits come
And all complexities of fury leave,
Dying into a dance,
An agony of trance,
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
The golden smithies of the Emperor!
Marbles of the dancing floor
Break bitter furies of complexity,
Those images that yet
Fresh images beget,
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

The bitterness prevails in *Last Poems and Plays*, and takes very unpleasant forms:

You think it horrible that lust and rage
Should dance attendance upon my old age;
They were not such a plague when I was young:
What else have I to spur me into song?—

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There is enough in the book to give point to this comment of the poet's. And we don't need his own explicit prompting to make us ask whether the plight revealed, the terrible barrenness (see in particular the play, *Purgatory*), hasn't some critical bearing on his best poetry:

> Those masterful images because complete
> Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?
> A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,
> Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
> Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
> Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone,
> I must lie down where all the ladders start,
> In the foul rag-and-bone shop of my heart.

Certainly ' masterful images ' is appropriately suggestive in its application to the mature work, that on which Yeats's status as a major poet rests. The positives erected in it to support his ' ladder ' may be said to be pride and an ideal aristocratic beauty, the two closely associated. Here, from *Last Poems and Plays*, is a characteristic image:

> . . . Maud Gonne at Howth Station
> waiting a train,
>
> Pallas Athene in that straight back and arrogant head.

We can rarely forget the straight back and the arrogance in the late Yeats—the great Yeats—and the prevailing notes of the present volume make us remember what inseparable accompaniments scorn and bitterness always were of the positive attitudes. And even the sense of futility associated here with the quest of a strained perfection—

> ' Let the fools rage, I swerved in naught,
> Something to perfection brought;'
> *But louder sang the ghost, ' What then?'*
>
> [*Last Poems and Plays*, p. 18]

—was always there; we remember *I am worn out with dreams*, *The Collarbone of a Hare* and the rest. So there is an ironic pathos in that last stanza of *Among School Children* (in *The Tower*):

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Labour is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

The chestnut tree is a symbol for the fulness of life that is never to be found in Yeats's poetry and the suggestion of which is certainly not the attraction he offers. His heroic achievement—the development out of pre-Raphaelitism through the Celtic Twilight into a poetry quite clear of the Romantic ' poetical ' tradition—will remain what it has been for us. The major quality and the element of greatness cannot be denied. But the sense of a heavy price paid and of power wasted and of results incommensurate with effort becomes stronger as we are able to look back and take stock. His pride and beauty, limited and qualified positives as they must in any case appear to us, are not there any substantial creation. What he has to give us is an attitude, defined in a manner and an idiom.

The valuation I intend may be indicated by saying that he seems to me, while a major poet, to come below Donne, Marvell, Pope, Wordsworth, Byron, Hopkins and Eliot.

There are some interesting things, of course, in this last volume, but the only poem that I find to add to the number of the memorable is *Those Images* (p. 47). To end, however, with a reminder of one of the more admirable aspect of Yeats's pride, here is the final stanza of *The Municipal Gallery Revisited*:

And here's John Synge himself, that rooted man,
' Forgetting human words,' a grave deep face.
You that would judge me, do not judge alone
This book or that, come to this hallowed place
Where my friends' portraits hang and look thereon ;
Ireland's history in their lineaments trace ;
Think where man's glory most begins and ends,
And say my glory was I had such friends.

F. R. LEAVIS.

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CLASSICAL AND ROMANTIC AGAIN

TRADITION AND ROMANTICISM, by B. Ifor Evans (Methuen, 6/-).

The conventional taste of thirty or forty years ago had at least the merit of a consistent view of literary history. The main poetic landmarks were fixed, the valuable territories charted, and even the barren waste of the eighteenth century neatly mapped out in terms of prosaic verse satirists and precursors of Romanticism. Your modern academic presents a confused and unhappy picture in comparison. While careful to show that he has outgrown the old prejudices, he nevertheless accepts no modern revaluation of the tradition, but tries desperately to make the most of all worlds. Afraid to commit himself to an original judgment of value, he accepts all the safe reputations and indulges in a kind of pseudo-scientific botanising among their secondary characteristics.

Professor Ifor Evans' book is unfortunately no exception. He sets out to show that the Romantic-Classical controversy is misleading, and proposes ' to examine the tradition of our poetry, or rather the conception of our poetry held by poets in successive centuries.' But we soon find that although it is an inadequate distinction, ' the polarity of " classical " and " romantic " remains often as the most tangible way in which the problem " the progress of poetry " can be approached.' We are invited to consider the different types of compromise between the two attitudes reached by the main English poets from Chaucer to Yeats and Eliot. Thus, Chaucer did not disdain the romances which he outgrew ; Spenser combined Romantic chivalry and legend with moral and social aims, and Shakespeare, before the ' moral and intellectual ' elements became prominent in his work had developed Chaucer's compromise. (Professor Ifor Evans is not deterred from slurring clumsily over most of the mature work.) Seventeenth century poetry is considered from the point of view of the effect of the new scientific thought and the absence of a native mythology. Donne dismissed mythology in his effort to keep poetry in contact with reality. Milton effects an individual compromise by bringing both romantic and classical elements into the service of a Christian epic; but Dryden, not finding a useful mythology to hand, subordinates verse to reason

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and actuality. Pope's *Rape of the Lock* is ' part of the farewell to mythology which limited the purposes of eighteenth-century poetry.'

The blurb tells us that among the author's more challenging conclusions is his reassessment of the romantic poets. But the reader who expects something provocative and original will be disappointed. With an air of discovery Professor Ifor Evans repeats the truism that Scott, the Byron of the tales and the early Shelley belong really to the Gothic tradition. His account of Keats is the accepted one, more or less. He treats Wordsworth as a mystic who broke with the main tradition of English poetry since the Renaissance in trying to express a unique individual experience. Shelley's ' lyrical power,' we are told, should be admitted without question, but he always has an ethical or philosophical purpose, and in *Prometheus Unbound* he returns to tradition and revitalises the old classical mythology. With Victorians the tradition begins to break down; they failed to find a satisfactory mythology, since the classical variety was now inappropriate, but nevertheless much of their work can be ' accepted as poetical experience.' The pre-Raphaelite period contained within itself the reaction (Patmore, Hardy and Meredith, as well as Hopkins), which preludes the twentieth century.

Perhaps this summary gives some notion of the vague abstractions of Professor Ifor Evans' critical style. It remains to add that for the most part he avoids judgments, even of comparative value, except where he assumes the conventional estimate, and that he conducts his arguments with a minimum of quotation and particular analysis. This results in such statements as '(Donne) fell short of one aspect of greatness by the doubtful quality of his seriousness . . . the mind had become self-conscious in Donne's poetry, separated from wisdom.' One suspects that Professor Ifor Evans disapproves of the line of wit, or at least thinks it insignificant in the tradition, since he jumps straight from Donne to Cowley. Milton's verse, we are told, " returned to the adorned tradition of Spenser and Shakespeare and away from the abrupt realism and natural speech rhythms of Donne "—realism and speech rhythms one gathers, are not characteristic of Shakespeare. Milton's academic status is re-established with the invocation of Professor Grierson and the easy sidestepping of all the objections brought against his

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grand style from Pope and Keats to Mr. Murry, Mr. Eliot, and Mr. Leavis: we hear of his 'intellectual triumph over form' and his beneficial influence on the verse of Wordsworth and Keats. The academic's method of critical defence is either to bring in, irrelevantly, the historical estimate, or to assert a broadminded and catholic appreciation of all established values in the manner of this remark on Gray: 'the verse is to be enjoyed as a picture or statue, or a vase elaborately chased and burnished. His verbal baroque . . . and the long complex stanza so adroitly controlled, offer enjoyment for those who, unlike Johnson, find pleasure in their rare and elaborate beauty.' Professor Ifor Evans' subtlety in discerning unsuspected literary parallels may be gauged from his statement that Tennyson 'in the Idylls as in much of his work, resembles not the poets who precede him but Dryden and Pope . . . like Dryden he wished to make 'good numbers,' and like Pope his interest was not self-revelation, but the study of men and society with instrusions into philosophy and morality.'

It would be tedious to pursue further examples. Professor Ifor Evans' 'defences' leave us cold, since he doesn't understand the 'attacks.' The notion that it is the duty of the critic to judge, *ériger en lois ses impressions personnelles*, and to relate his judgments to a scheme of moral values would no doubt strike him as crabbed and narrow. Poetry, he says, 'can accomplish a number of distinct things all valuable, and not much is gained by setting them in order of merit.' Catholicity of taste is a virtue, no doubt, but the alternative to academic timidity need not be an attempt to emulate Rymer or Le Bossu. The most useful critics are those who have honestly set down their individual judgments: what would Johnson or Coleridge have said to that '*all* valuable'?

R. G. Cox.

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'NATURE' IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BACKGROUND, by Basil Willey (Chatto and Windus, 16/-).

It is not easy to be sure what degree of unity Mr. Willey's book lays claim to. His purpose as he describes it in the preface is twofold: more generally 'to illustrate the importance, in the eighteenth century, of the idea of "nature" in religion, ethics, philosophy and politics, and in particular to indicate some stages in that divinization of "Nature" which culminates in Wordsworth,' and more particularly to provide 'prolegomena to the study of Wordsworth and Coleridge.' To these two purposes may be taken to correspond the two classes of readers he has in mind: 'the general reader who takes an unprofessional interest in the history of ideas' and 'the literary student who may care to seek for explanations or analogies outside the sphere of "pure" literature.'

Even at this point the doubt arises whether the very modesty of Mr. Willey's aims may not have prevented him from writing as serviceable a book as he otherwise might—whether the more ambitious project of appealing to a single class of readers presumed to be interested in correlating the history of ideas with the study of 'pure' literature might not have made possible a more satisfactory treatment. This suspicion is confirmed as we proceed in the book. Mr. Willey is, one might say, too solicitous for his readers. He disclaims the intention of giving a history of thought, nor does he trespass on literary criticism. Now no doubt there is a place for a study that is neither history of philosophy nor literary criticism, but surely some interest in both is presupposed if we are to follow with profit the sort of discussion that Mr. Willey gives us, and—my main point—we ought to be brought into contact with what is most vital both in thought and in 'pure' literature if we are to study their relations. Mr. Willey has chosen to take another course, and, for too much of the book, he ploughs a steady furrow through mediocrity. To exaggerate somewhat, he solves the problem of avoiding history of thought on the one hand and strict literary criticism on the other by devoting most of his space

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to discussing what is neither thought nor literature—at least neither important thought nor important literature.

It is however a possible view that it is precisely second-rate thinkers like Hartley, Priestley, and Godwin that have the greatest influence on imaginative literature, so that Mr. Willey might be taking the best way of writing ' prolegomena to the study of Wordsworth and Coleridge.' And there is no doubt that it is useful to have his clear summaries of writers of the eighteenth century some of whose ideas reappear in the Romantic poets. But Mr. Willey is aiming at giving us rather more than that. He takes as his guiding thread the notion of ' nature,' and hopes to throw light on Wordsworth and Coleridge thereby. A good deal does emerge about the ambiguity of this conception in the eighteenth century, but it is here that Mr. Willey seems to have handicapped himself most by his decision not to go too deeply into the history of thought. By confining himself mainly to writers of minor importance, he turns what might have been a genuine history of a notion into a set of illustrations of a thesis which comes out at the end with little more significance than it has at its first formulation. In particular, the formula ' divinization of nature ' used to refer to the process he discusses is one whose meaning does not really develop—it is only brought in from time to time as a guiding thread. Indeed, its appropriateness at any stage is not clear. It is doubtfully applicable to Wordsworth, and obviously it is not very precisely used to describe, in the early part of the book, the attitude towards nature which is expressed in the argument from design. Surely the prominence of this notion in eighteenth-century apologetic is due less to any deepened sense of the significance of nature than to the gap left by the disappearance in an unmetaphysical age of the argument from contingence. There is no doubt something in Mr. Willey's notion (p. 64) that ' the Wordsworthian nature-religion can be regarded, less as something wholly new, than as the culmination of a process which had been implicit in the " humanist " tradition ever since the Renaissance.' But it would need to be more elaborately developed and to be linked more precisely with the ' scientific movement ' which Mr. Willey invokes in a cheerfully inclusive way in the first chapter. It is only right to add that this chapter contains a number of suggestive points ; that, for instance, ' in passing into the seventeenth and eighteenth

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centuries " Nature " ceases to be mainly a regulating principle, and becomes mainly a liberating principle ' (p. 16).

The kindred theme of the transition from an ' abstract ' to a ' concrete ' idea of nature, from, say, the Deists to Burke, emerges more clearly. The chapter on Godwin and Burke shows a sense of many of the complications involved, and is perhaps the most satisfactory in the book. For one thing, the conceptions of nature and history to be found in Burke are genuinely relevant to the development of Wordsworth. But even here, in the rather compressed discussion on pp. 205-212, one misses a treatment that should get closer to grips with what is really living and important in thought and literature. The rather spectral figures of the previous chapters—Hartley, Holbach, Priestley—cannot really support the burden that Mr. Willey's argument imposes on them. The ambiguities of the word ' Nature ' might, for instance, have been better brought out by reference to Rousseau, who had an awareness of such complexities denied to those lesser writers. On this point, Mr. Willey might with profit have consulted an article on Rousseau by D. J. Allan (*Philosophy*, 1937), and, in general, concentration on Rousseau might have modified the somewhat facile contrast of ' head ' and ' heart ' (p. 250)—the Rousseau whom Mr. Willey disposes of under the rubric of ' feeling ' was also the thinker who put Kant ' on the right track.'[1]

When he finally arrives at Wordsworth, Mr. Willey's native candour compels him to admit the relative unimportance for the

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[1]It would be absurd to make Wordsworth into a systematic philosopher, but one might throw out the suggestion that his development would be better understood if it were connected with Rousseau's views on the transition from ' natural ' to ' civil ' liberty. Compare the point made in Mr. Allan's article (p. 202) that the purpose of this transition is ' not to spurn the natural order in favour of something different, but rather to flatter it by imitation,' and in his summary (p. 204) ' Rousseau preaches a return to nature, *first*, because he would have us embrace the natural education and religion, and *secondly*, because civilized society, though artificial, is according to him an imitation of nature. It models itself on the inflexibility of natural law.' Wordsworth's familiarity with *Émile* is well-known. *Cf.* Professor Harper's *Life*.

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understanding of him of the background he has built up in the previous chapters. The relation with the conceptions of Burke is, as I have said, duly dwelt on, and the more fleeting influence of Godwin judiciously discussed. If anything, Mr. Willey tends to exaggerate the detachment from tradition of what is most essential in Wordsworth, just because—to hark back to a previous criticism—his discussion has not held firmly to the living continuity of literature. Instead we are presented with a Wordsworth whose individual vision is rightly and discriminatingly stressed, but whose connection with the past is summed up in the suggestion ' that neither he nor others of his time might have lifted up their eyes to the hills for such help if the eighteenth century had not so unfalteringly directed them towards the visible universe as the clearest evidence of God.' (p. 272). This inheritance (loosely described, as I have said, under the heading ' divinization of nature ') shares with ' the more obvious sanative virtues of the open-air ' the responsibility for the notion of Nature as a substitute for religion which Mr. Willey finds in various forms in Cowper, Rousseau, Gray, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Arnold and Mark Rutherford. Here as elsewhere (*e.g.*, p. 30) Mr. Willey seems to see analogies more clearly than differences. The differences, he might indeed say, belong to the literary critic, the analogies to the reader with ' an unprofessional interest in the history of ideas.' But the ignoring of literary differences could only be fully justified by a clearer presentation of the underlying unity of idea than Mr. Willey gives us. As it is, he suggests an assimilation of Wordsworth to the *Scholar Gypsy* attitude, and though this is modified by what follows, the picture remains a little out of focus.

Much of what I have said may seem less like a criticism than a complaint that Mr. Willey has not written a different sort of book. I do in fact wish that he had, but it would be unfair to leave the impression that his book does not contain much that should be of value for its professed purpose—as a ' background.' The balanced and untechnical sketch of Hume should be of special value to the literary student, and the other chapters on individual thinkers share the same qualities of care and lucidity.

J. C. MAXWELL.

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MUSIC

THE MUSIC REVIEW, Vol. I, No. 1, February, 1940 (Heffer and Sons, 4/- per copy, postage 3d., 16/- per annum, post free).

The inauguration of a new periodical seriously devoted to music is, in these times, remarkable in itself ; and though the contents of this, the first, number of *The Music Review* may not be peculiarly distinctive or stimulating we must remember that these are very early days and that if ' the musical public ' allows this venture to die as it has allowed so many others it can have only itself to blame that intelligent and well-informed discussion of the problems of music and of contemporary music-making is so hard to come by. This number is interesting mostly for a substantial article by Egon Wellesz on the symphonies of Mahler. Considering that Mahler has, on the continent and particularly of course in pre-Nazi Austria, for years been accepted and performed as a classic, the last of the great Viennese tradition that began with Haydn, and that his cause has been so fervently advocated by musicians and scholars as distinguished as Dr. Wellesz ; it is surely time that we in England were given an opportunity to hear his music played as he intended it to be played. As Dr. Wellesz points out, the fashionable movements that made him ' unfashionable ' are now antiquated themselves ; one has only to consider the example of the recordings which Bruno Walter has made for the Mahler Society to realize that Mahler's music, adequately performed, will always be independent of fashion. But the muscles of English musicologists are so preposterously contorted by the exquisite humour of their jokes about the colossal resources necessary to perform some of the ' old wind-bag's ' scores that no doubt they would be incapable of listening to his music even if they had the opportunity.

W.H.M.

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